Brady Cyrus Townsend

By the World Forgot: A Double Romance of the East and West

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Содержание

Cyrus Townsend Brady
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BOOK I

"*Ship me somewheres east of Suez*"

BY THE WORLD FORGOT

CHAPTER I
A CLASH OF WILLS AND HEARTS

"For the last time, will you marry me?"

"No."

"But you don't love him."

"No."

"And you do love me?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it."

"Would I be here if I did not?"

Now that adverb was rather indefinite. "Here" might have meant the private office, which was bad enough, or his arms, which was worse or better, depending upon the view-point. She could think of nothing better to dispel the reasonable incredulity of the man than to nestle closer to him, if that were possible, and kiss him. It was not a perfunctory kiss, either. It meant something to the woman, and she made it mean something to the man. Indeed, there was fire and passion enough in it to have quickened a pulse in a stone image. It answered its purpose in one way. There could be no real doubt in the man's mind as to the genuineness of that love he had just called in question in his pique at her refusal. The kiss thrilled him with its fervor, but it left him more miserable than ever. It did not plunge him immediately into that condition, however, for he drew her closer to his breast

again, and as the struck flint flashes fire he gave her back all that she had given him, and more.

Ordinarily in moments like that it is the woman who first breaks away, but the solution of touch was brought about by the man. He set the girl down somewhat roughly in the chair behind the big desk before which they were standing and turned away. She suffered him thus to dispose of her without explanation. Indeed, she divined the reason which presently came to his lips as he walked up and down the big room, hands in pockets, his brows knitted, a dark frown on his face.

"I can't stand any more of that just now," he said, referring to her caress; "if ever in my life I wanted to think clearly it is now and with you in my arms-Say, for the very last time, will you marry me?"

"I cannot."

"You mean you will not."

"Put it that way if you must. It amounts to the same thing."

"Why can't you, or won't you, then?"

"I've told you a thousand times."

"Assume that I don't know and tell me again."

"What's the use?"

"Well, it gives me another chance to show you how foolish you are, to overrule every absurd argument that you can put forth-"

"Except two."

"What are they?"

"My father and myself."

"Exactly. You have inherited a full measure, excuse me, of his infernal obstinacy."

"Most people call it invincible determination."

"It doesn't make any difference what it's called, it amounts to the same thing."

"I suppose I have."

"Now look at the thing plainly from a practical point of view."

"Is there anything practical in romance, in love, in passions like ours?"

"There is something practical in everything I do and especially in this. I've gone over the thing a thousand times. I'll go over it again once more. You don't love the man you have promised to marry; you do love me. Furthermore, he doesn't love you and I do-Oh, he has a certain affection for you, I'll admit. Nobody could help that, and it's probably growing, too. I suppose in time he will-"

"Love me as you do?"

"Never; no one could do that, but as much as he could love any one. But that isn't the point. For a quixotic scruple, a mistaken idea of honor, an utterly unwarranted conception of a daughter's duty, you are going to marry a man you don't and can't love and-"

"You are very positive. How do you know I can't?"

"I know you love me and I know that a girl like you can't change any more than I can."

"That's the truth," answered the girl with a finality which bespoke extreme youth, and shut off any further discussion of

that phase.

"Well, then, you'll be unhappy, I'll be unhappy, and he'll be unhappy."

"I can make him happy."

"No, you can't. If he learns to love you he will miss what I would enjoy. He'll find out the truth and be miserable."

"Your solicitude for his happiness-"

"Nonsense. I tell you I can't bear to give you up, and I won't. I shouldn't be asked to. You made me love you; I didn't intend to."

"It wasn't a difficult task," said the girl smiling faintly for the first time.

"Task? It was no task at all. The first time I saw you I loved you, and now you have lifted me up to heaven only to dash me down to hell."

"Strong language."

"Not strong enough. Seriously, I can't, I won't let you do it."

"You must. I have to. You don't understand. His father gave my father his first start in life."

"Yes, and your father could buy his father twenty times over."

"Perhaps he could, but that doesn't count. Our two fathers have been friends ever since my father came here, a boy without money or friends or anything, to make his fortune, and he made it."

"I wish to God he hadn't and you were as poor as I was when I landed here six years ago. If I could just have you without your millions on any terms I should be happy. It's those millions that

come between us."

"Yes, that's so," admitted the girl, recognizing that the man only spoke the truth. "If I were poor it would be quite different. You see father's got pretty much everything out of life that money could buy. He has no ancestry to speak of but he's as proud as a peacock. The friendship between the two families has been maintained. The two old men determined upon this alliance as soon as I was born. My father's heart is set upon it. He has never crossed me in anything. He has been the kindest and most indulgent of men. Next to you I worship him. It would break his heart if I should back out now. Indeed, he is so set upon it that I am sure he would never consent to my marrying you or anybody else. He would disinherit me."

"Let him, let him. I've the best prospects of any broker in New York, and I've already got enough money for us to live on comfortably."

"I gave my word openly, freely," answered the girl. "I wasn't in love with any one then and I liked him as well as any man I had ever met. Now that his father has died, my father is doubly set upon it. I simply must go through with it."

"And as your father sacrificed pretty much everything to build the family fortune, so you are going to sacrifice yourself to add position to it."

"Now that is unworthy of you," said the girl earnestly. "That motive may be my father's but it isn't mine."

"Forgive me," said the man, who knew that the girl spoke even

less than the truth.

"I can understand how you feel because I feel desperate myself; but honor, devotion, obedience to a living man, promise to a dead man, his father, who was as fond of me as if I had already been his daughter, all constrain me."

"They don't constrain me," said the man desperately, coming to the opposite side of the big desk and smiting it heavily with his hand. "All that weighs nothing with me. I have a mind to pick you up now and carry you away bodily."

"I wish you could," responded the girl with so much honest simplicity that his heart leaped at the idea, "but you could never get further than the elevator, or, if you went down the stairs, than the street, because my honor would compel me to struggle and protest."

"You wouldn't do that."

"I would. I would have to. For if I didn't there would be no submitting to *force majeure*. No, my dear boy, it is quite hopeless."

"It isn't. For the last time, will you marry me?"

"As I have answered that appeal a hundred times in the last six months, I cannot."

"Are there any conditions under which you could?"

"Two."

"What are they?"

"What is the use of talking about them? They cannot occur."

"Nevertheless tell me what they are. I've got everything

I've ever gone after heretofore. I've got some of your father's perseverance."

"You called it obstinacy a while ago."

"Well, it's perseverance in me. What are your conditions?"

"The consent of two people."

"And who are they?"

"My father and my fiancé."

"I have your own, of course."

"Yes, and you have my heartiest prayer that you may get both. Oh," she went on, throwing up her hands. "I don't think I can stand any more of this. I know what I must do and you must not urge me. These scenes are too much for me."

"Why did you come here, then?" asked the man. "You know I can't be in your presence without appealing to you."

"To show you this," said the girl, drawing a yellow telegram slip from her bag which she had thrown on the desk.

"Is it from him? I had one, too," answered the man, picking it up.

"Of course," said the girl, "since you and he are partners in business. I never thought of that. I should not have come."

"Heaven bless you for having done so. Every moment that I see you makes me more determined. If I could see you all the time and-"

"He'll be here in a month," interrupted the girl. "He wants the wedding to take place immediately and so do I."

"Why this indecent haste?"

"It has been a year since the first postponement and-Oh, what must be must be! I want to get it over and be done with it. I can't stand these scenes any more than you can. Look at me."

The man did more than look. The sight of the piteous appealing figure was more than he could stand. He took her in his arms again.

"I wish to God he had drowned in the South Seas," he said savagely.

"Oh, don't say that. He's your best friend," interposed the girl, laying her hand upon his lips.

"But you are the woman I love, and no friendship shall come between us."

The girl shook her head and drew herself away.

"I must go now. I really can't endure this any longer."

"Very well," said the man, turning to get his hat.

"No," said the girl, "you mustn't come with me."

"As you will," said the other, "but hear me. That wedding is set for thirty days from today?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll not give you up until you are actually married to him. I'll find some way to stop it, to gain time, to break it off. I swear you shan't marry him if I have to commit murder."

She thought he spoke with the pardonable exaggeration of a lover. She shook her head and bit her lip to keep back the tears.

"Good-bye," she said. "It is no use. We can't help it."

She was gone. But the man was not jesting. He was in a state

to conceive anything and to attempt to carry out the wildest and most extravagant proposition. He sat down at his desk to think it over, having told his clerks in the outer office that he was not to be disturbed by any one for any cause.

CHAPTER II
THE STUBBORNNESS OF STEPHANIE

At one point of the triangle stands the beautiful Stephanie Maynard; at another, George Harnash, able and energetic; at the third, Derrick Beekman, who was a dilettante in life. George Harnash is something of a villain, although he does not end as the wicked usually do. Derrick Beekman is the hero, although he does not begin as heroes are expected to do. Stephanie Maynard is just a woman, heroine or not, as shall be determined. Before long the triangle will be expanded into a square by the addition of another woman, also with some decided qualifications for a heroine; but she comes later, not too late, however, to play a deciding part in the double love story into which we are to be plunged.

Of that more anon, as the sixteenth century would put it; and indeed this story of today reaches back into that bygone period for one of its origins. Romance began-where? when? All romances began in the Garden of Eden, but it needs not to trace the development of this one through all the centuries intervening between that period and today. This story, if not its romance, began with an arrangement. The arrangement was entered into between Derrick Beekman senior, since deceased,

and John Maynard, still very much alive.

Maynard was a new man in New York, a new man on the street. He was the head of the great Inter-Oceanic Trading Company. The Maynard House flag floated over every sea from the mast heads, or jack staffs, of the Maynard ships. Almost as widely known as the house flag was the Maynard daughter. The house flag was simple but beautiful; the daughter was beautiful but by no means simple. She was a highly specialized product of the nineteenth century. Being the only child of much money, she was everything outwardly and visibly that her father desired her to be, and to make her that he had planned carefully and spent lavishly. With her father's undeniable money and her own undisputed beauty she was a great figure in New York society from the beginning.

No one could have so much of both the desirable attributes mentioned-beauty and money-and go unspoiled in New York-certainly not until age had tempered youth. But Stephanie Maynard was rather an unusual girl. Many of her good qualities were latent but they were there. It was not so much those hidden good qualities but the dazzling outward and visible characteristics that had attracted the attention of old Derrick Beekman.

Beekman had everything that Maynard had not and some few things that Maynard had-in a small measure, at least. For instance, he was a rich man, although his riches could only be spoken of modestly beside Maynard's vast wealth.

But Beekman added to a comfortable fortune an unquestioned social position; old, established, assured. Those who would fain make game of him behind his back-such a thing was scarcely possible to his face-used to say that he traced his descent to every Dutchman that ever rallied around one-legged, obstinate, Peter Stuyvesant and his predecessors. The social approval of the Beekmans-originally, of course, Van Beeckman-was like a *lettre de cachet*. It immediately imprisoned one in the tightest and most exclusive circle of New York, the social bastille from which the fortunate captive is rarely ever big enough to wish to break out.

Beekman's pride in his ancestry was only matched by his ambitions for his son, like Stephanie Maynard, an only child. If to the position and, as he fancied, the brains of the Beekmans could be allied the fortune and the business acumen of the Maynards, the world itself would be at the feet of the result of such a union. Now Maynard's money bought him most things he wanted but it had not bought and could not buy Beekman and that for which he stood. Maynard's beautiful daughter had to be thrown into the scales.

Maynard had no ancestry in particular. Self-made men usually laugh at the claims of long descent, but secretly they feel differently. Being the Rudolph of Hapsburg of the family is more of a pose or a boast than not. I doubt not that even the great Corsican felt that in his secret heart which he revealed to no one. Maynard's patent of nobility might date from his first battle on the stock exchange, his financial Montenotte, but in his heart of

hearts he would rather it had its origin in some old and musty parchment of the past.

Beekman, who was much older than Maynard, had actually helped that young man when he first started out to encounter the world and the flesh and the devil in New York and to beat them down or bring them to heel. A friendship, purely business at first, largely patronizing in the beginning on the one hand, deferentially grateful on the other, had grown up between the somewhat ill-sorted pair. And it had not been broken with passing years.

Maynard, unfortunately for his social aspirations, had married before he had become great. Many men achieve greatness only to find a premature partner an encumbrance to a career. However, Maynard's wife, another social nobody with little but beauty to recommend her, had done her best for her husband by dying before she was either a drag or a help to his fortunes. The two men, each actuated by different motives, which, however, tended to the same end, had arranged the match between the last Beekman and the first Maynard; and that each secretly fancied himself condescending to the other did not stand in the way. The young people had agreeably fallen in with the proposals of the elders, neither of whom was accustomed to be balked or questioned-for old Beekman was as much of an autocrat as Maynard. Filial obedience was indeed a tradition in the Beekman family. There were no traditions at all in the Maynard family, but the same custom obtained with regard to Stephanie.

Young Beekman was good looking, athletic, prominent in society, a graduate of the best university, popular, and generally considered able, although he had accomplished little, having no stimulus thereto, by which to justify that public opinion. He went everywhere, belonged to the best clubs, and was a most eligible suitor. He danced divinely, conversed amusingly, made love gallantly if somewhat perfunctorily, having had abundant practice in all pursuits. For the rest, what little business he transacted was as a broker and business partner of George Harnash, who, for their common good, made the most of the connections to which Beekman could introduce him.

Beekman, who had taken life lightly, indeed, at once recognized the wisdom of his father's rather forcible suggestion that it was time for him to settle down. He saw how the Maynard millions would enhance his social prestige, and if he should be moved to undertake business affairs seriously, as Harnash often urged, would offer a substantial background for his operations.

Stephanie Maynard was beautiful enough to please any man. She was well enough educated and well enough trained for the most fastidious of the fastidious Beekmans. In any real respect she was a fit match for Derrick Beekman, indeed for anybody. There was no society into which she would be introduced that she would not grace.

From a feeling of condescension quite in keeping with his blood young Beekman was rapidly growing more interested in and more fond of his promised wife. Her feelings probably

would have developed along the same lines had it not been for George Harnash. He was Beekman's best friend. They had been classmates and roommates at college. Harnash like Beekman was a broker. Indeed the firm of Beekman & Harnash was already well spoken of on the street, especially on account of the ability of the junior partner, who was everywhere regarded as a young man with a brilliant future.

Now Harnash hung, as it were, like Mohammed's coffin, 'twixt heaven and earth. He was not socially assured and unexceptionable as Beekman, but he was much more so than the Maynards. He did not begin with even the modest wealth of the former, but he was rapidly acquiring a fortune and, what is better, winning the respect and admiration of friends and enemies alike by his bold and successful operations. It was generally recognized that Harnash was the more active of the two young partners. Beekman had put in most of the capital, having inherited a reasonable sum from his mother and much more from his father, but Harnash was the guiding spirit of the firm's transactions.

Harnash, who was the exact opposite of Beekman, as fair as the other man was dark, fell wildly in love with Stephanie Maynard. To do him justice, this plunge occurred before definite matrimonial arrangements between the houses of Beekman and Maynard had been entered into. Harnash had not contemplated such a possibility. The two friends were in exceedingly confidential relationship to each other, and Beekman had manifested only a most casual interest in

Stephanie Maynard. Harnash, seeing the present hopelessness of his passion, had concealed it from Beekman. Therefore, the announcement casually made by his friend and confirmed the day after by the society papers overwhelmed him.

To do him justice further, while it could not be said that Harnash was oblivious to the fact that the woman he loved was her father's daughter, he would have loved her if she had been a nobody. While he could not be indifferent to the further fact that whoever won her would ultimately command the Maynard millions, George Harnash was so confident of his own ability to succeed that he would have preferred to make his own way and have his wife dependent upon him for everything. However, he was too level headed a New Yorker not to realize that even if he could achieve his ambition the Maynard millions would come in handy.

The thing that made it so hard for Harnash to bear the new situation was the carelessness with which Beekman entered into it. He felt that if the marriage could be prevented it would not materially interfere with the happiness of his friend. Harnash had deliberately set himself to the acquirement of everything he desired. Honorably, lawfully, if he could he would get what he wanted, but get it he would. He found that he had never wanted anything so much as he wanted Stephanie Maynard. Money and position had been his ambitions, but these gave place to a woman. He did not arrive at a determination to take Stephanie Maynard from Derrick Beekman, if he could, without great

searchings of heart, but the more he thought about it, the longer he contemplated the possibility of the marriage of the woman he loved to the man he also loved, the more impossible grew the situation.

At first he had put all thought of self out of his mind, or had determined so to do, in order to accept the situation, but he made the mistake of continuing to see Stephanie during the process and when he discovered that she was not indifferent to him he hesitated, wavered, fell. By fair means or foul the engagement must be broken. It could only be accomplished by getting Derrick Beekman out of the way. After that he would wring a consent out of Maynard. To that decision the girl had unconsciously contributed by laying down conditions which, by a curious mental twist, the man felt in honor bound to meet.

Both the elder Beekman and John Maynard were men of firmness and decision. Wedding preparations had gone on apace. The invitations were all but out when Beekman was gathered to his ancestors-there could be no heaven for him where they were not-after an apoplectic stroke. This postponed the wedding and gave George Harnash more time. Now Derrick Beekman had devotedly loved his stern, proud old father, the only near relative he had in the world. He decided to spend the time intervening between that father's sudden and shocking death and his marriage on a yachting cruise to the South Seas. It was characteristic of his feeling for Stephanie Maynard that he had not hesitated to leave her for that long period. The field was thus left entirely to

Harnash.

The Maynard-Beekman engagement, of course, had been made public, and Stephanie's other suitors had accepted the situation, but not Harnash. He was a man of great power and persuasiveness and ability and he made love with the same desperate, concentrated energy that he played the business game. He was quite frank about it. He told Stephanie that if she or Beekman or both of them had shown any passion for the other, such as he felt for her, he would have considered himself in honor bound to eliminate himself, but since it would obviously be *un mariage de convenance*, since both the parties thereto would enter into it lightly and unadvisedly, he was determined to interpose. And there was even in the girl's eyes abundant justification for his action.

No woman wants to be taken as a matter of course. Stephanie Maynard had been widely wooed, more or less all over the world. Although she did not care especially for Derrick Beekman, she resented his somewhat cavalier attitude toward her, and his witty, amusing, but by no means passionately devoted letters, somewhat infrequent, too. Harnash made great progress, yet he came short of complete success.

The Maynards were nobodies socially, that is, their ancestors had been, and they had not yet broken into the most exclusive set, the famous hundred and fifty of New York's best, as they styled themselves to the great amusement of the remaining five million or so, but they came, after all, of a stock possessed of substantial

virtues. Stephanie's father was accustomed to boast that his word was his bond, and, unlike many who say that, it really was. People got to know that when old John Maynard said a thing he could be depended upon. If he gave a promise he would keep it even if he ruined himself in the keeping, and his daughter, in that degree, was not unlike him.

Almost a year after his father's death Derrick Beekman sent cablegrams from Honolulu saying he was coming back, and George Harnash and Stephanie awoke from their dream.

"I love you," repeated Stephanie to Harnash in another of the many, not to say continuous, discussions they held after that day at the office. "You can't have any doubt about that, but my word has been passed. I don't dislike Derrick, either. But I'd give anything on earth if I were free."

"And when you were free?"

"You know that I'd marry you in a minute."

"Even if your father forbade?"

"I don't believe he would."

"If he did we would win him over."

"You might as well try to win over a granite mountain. But there's no use talking, I'm not free."

"It's this foolish pride of yours."

"Foolish it may be. I've heard so much about the Beekman word of honor and the Beekman faith that I want to show that the Maynard honor and faith and determination are no less."

"And you are going to sacrifice yourself and me for that

shibboleth, are you?"

"I see no other way. Believe me," said the girl, who had resolved to allow no more demonstrations of affection now that it was all settled and her prospective husband was on the way to her, "I seem cold and indifferent to you, but if I let myself go-"

"Oh, Stephanie, please let yourself go again, even if for the last time," pleaded George Harnash, and Stephanie did. When coherent speech was possible he continued: "Well, if Beekman himself releases you or if he withdrew or disappeared or-"

"I don't have to tell you what my answer would be."

"And I've got to be best man at the wedding! I've got to stand by and-"

"Why didn't you speak before?" asked the girl bitterly.

"I was no match for you then. I'm not a match for you now."

"You should have let me be the judge of that."

"But your father?"

"I tell you if I hadn't promised, all the fathers on earth wouldn't make any difference. Now we have lived in a fool's paradise for a year. You're Derrick's friend and you're mine."

"Only your friend?"

"Do I have to tell you again how much I love you? But that must stop now. It should have stopped long ago. You can't come here any more except as Derrick's friend."

"I can't come here at all, then."

"No, I suppose not. And that will be best. Let us put this behind us as a dream of happiness which we will never forget,

but from which we awake to find it only a dream."

"It's no dream to me. I will never give you up. I will never cease to try to make it a reality until you are bound to the other man."

They were standing close together as it was, but he took the step that brought him to her side and he swept her to his heart without resistance on her part. She would give her hand to Derrick Beekman, but her heart she could not give, for that was in George Harnash's possession, and when he clasped her in his arms and kissed her, she suffered him. She kissed him back. Her own arms drew him closer. It was a passionate farewell, a burial service for a love that could not go further. It was she who pushed him from her.

"I will never give you up, never," he repeated. "Great as is my regard for Beekman, sometimes I think that I'll kill him at the very foot of the altar to have you."

Stephanie's iron control gave way. She burst into tears, and George Harnash could say nothing to comfort her, but only gritted his teeth as he tore himself away, revolving all sorts of plans to accomplish his own desires.

To him came, with Mephistophelian appositeness, Mr. Bill Woywod.

CHAPTER III
BILL WOYWOD TO THE RESCUE

The three weeks that followed were more fraught with unpleasantness, not to say misery, than any Stephanie Maynard and George Harnash had ever passed. Of the two, Harnash was in the worse case. Stephanie had two things to distract her.

The approaching wedding meant the preparation of a trousseau. What had been got ready the year before would by no means serve for the second attempt at matrimony. Now no matter how deep and passionate a woman's feelings are she can never be indifferent to the preparation of a trousseau. Even death, which looms so horribly before the feminine mind, would be more tolerable if it were accompanied by a similar demand upon her activities. Yet a woman's grief in bereavement is never so deep as to make her careless as to the fit or becomingness of her mourning habiliments. Much more is this true of wedding garments.

Now if these somewhat cynical and slighting remarks be reprehended, nevertheless there is occupation even for the sacrificial victim in the preparation of a trousseau which, were it not so pleasant a pursuit, might even be called labor. The fit of Stephanie's dresses on her beautiful figure was not accomplished without toil, albeit of the submissive sort, on the part of the young lady. That was her first diversion.

For the second relief the girl had a great deal more confidence in her lover's promise than he had himself in his own prowess. Try as he might, plan as he could, he found no way out of the *impasse* so long as the solution of it was left entirely to him, and the woman was determined to be but a passive instrument.

The obvious course was to go frankly to his friend and lay before him the whole state of affairs in the hope that Beekman himself would cut the Gordian knot by declining the lady's hand. Two considerations prevented that. In the first place, Beekman had confidingly placed his love affair, together with his business affairs, in the hands of his partner. Harnash had not meant to play the traitor but he had been unable to resist the temptation that Stephanie presented, and he simply could not bring himself to make such a bare-faced admission of a breach of trust. Besides, he reasoned shrewdly that even if he did make such a confession it was by no means certain that Derrick Beekman would give up the girl. His letters, since his cable from Hawaii, had rather indicated a strengthening of his affection, and Harnash suspected that the realization that his betrothed was violently desired by someone else would just about develop that affection into a passion which could hardly be withstood.

In the second place, even if Beekman's affection for Harnash would lead him to take the action desired by his friend, there would still be Mr. Maynard to be won over. Harnash had not been associated with Maynard as a broker in various transactions which the older man had engineered, without having formed a

sufficiently correct judgment of his character to enable him to forecast absolutely what Maynard's position would be in that emergency. Maynard had a considerable liking and a growing respect for young Harnash. He had casually remarked to his daughter on more than one occasion that Harnash was a young man who would be heard from. Maynard had observed that Harnash strove for many things and generally got what he wanted.

Perhaps that remark, which the poor girl had treasured in her heart, had something to do with her confidence that somehow or other Harnash would work out the problem. But Harnash knew very well how terrible, not to say vindictive, an antagonist and enemy Maynard could be when he was crossed. If Beekman withdrew from the engagement, broke off the marriage, about which there had been sufficient notoriety on account of the first postponement after the older Beekman's death, Maynard's rage would know no bounds. He would assuredly wreak his vengeance upon Beekman, and if Harnash were implicated in any way the punishment would be extended to him.

Harnash knew that Beekman would not have cared a snap of his finger for the older Maynard's wrath. He was not that kind of a man. Nor would he himself have been deterred by the thought of it had he been a little more sure of his position financially. Whatever else he lacked, Harnash had courage to tackle anything or anybody, if there were the faintest prospect of success. But to fight Maynard at that stage in his career was

an impossibility. These weighty reasons accordingly decided him that it was useless and indeed impossible to appeal to his friend.

Again, while Harnash was accustomed to stop at nothing to procure his ends, and while he had declared that he would murder Beekman, he knew that although he meant it more than Stephanie supposed, he did not mean it enough to be able to do anything like that. His mind was in a turmoil. He really was fond of Beekman, and if Stephanie and Derrick had been wildly in love with each other Harnash believed that he would have been man enough to have kept out of the way and have fought down his disappointment as best he could. As it was, there was reason and justice in what he urged. Since Stephanie loved him and did not love Beekman, and since Beekman's affection was of a placid nature, the approaching union was horrible.

The wildest schemes and plans ran through his head or were suggested to him after intense thought, only to be rejected. The problem finally narrowed itself down to a question of time. Harnash was a great believer in the function of time in determining events. If he could postpone the marriage again he would have greater opportunity to work and plan. He had enough confidence in himself, backed by Stephanie's undoubted affection, to make him believe that with time he could bring about anything. Therefore he must eliminate Derrick Beekman, temporarily, at least, and he must do it before the wedding. The longer he could keep him away from Stephanie, the better would be his own chance. If even on the eve of the wedding the

groom could disappear, the fact would tend greatly to his ultimate advantage, provided Beekman were away long enough.

He concentrated his mind on this proposition. How could he cause Derrick Beekman to disappear the day before his wedding, and how, having spirited him away, could he keep him away long enough to make that disappearance worth while from the Harnash point of view? That was the final form of the problem in its last analysis. How was he to solve it?

He could have Beekman kidnapped, and hold him for ransom in some lonely place in the country. That was a solution which he dismissed almost as soon as he formulated it. The thing was impracticable. He would have to trust too many people. He could never keep him long in confinement. He himself would probably become the victim of continuous blackmail. In the face of rewards that would be offered, his employees would eventually betray him. Sooner or later, unless something happened to Beekman, he would get out. Harnash had plenty of hardihood, but he shivered at the thought of what he would have to meet when Beekman came for an accounting, as sooner or later he would. He would have to find some other way. What way?

Now Harnash's misery was further increased by the fact that Beekman had cabled him to go ahead with the preparations for the wedding. The Beekman yacht had broken down in Honolulu Harbor after that long cruise, and instead of following his telegram straight home, there had been a week of delay. He

had explained the situation by cables to Harnash, Stephanie, and her father.

After the yacht, her engines pretty well strained from the year's cruise, had been put in fair shape, ten days had been required for the return passage. Beekman had some business matters to attend to in San Francisco and he did not arrive in New York until a few days before the wedding, which was to take place at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the Bishop Suffragan and the Dean being the officiating clergymen designate.

It was fortunate in one sense that Beekman had been so delayed, for there was so much for him to do, so many people for him to see, that he had little opportunity for making love to his promised bride, and he had no chance to discern her real feelings any more than he had to find out Harnash's position. He had, indeed, remarked that Stephanie looked terribly worn and strained, and that George Harnash was haggard and spent to an extraordinary degree; but he attributed the one to the excitement of the marriage and the other to the fact that Harnash had been left so long alone to bear the burden of responsibility and decision in the rapidly increasing brokerage business.

When he had swept his unwilling bride-to-be to his heart and kissed her boisterously, he had told her that he would take care of her and see that the roses were brought back to her cheeks after they were married; and after he had shaken Harnash's hand vigorously he had slapped him on the back and declared to him that as soon as the honeymoon was over he would buckle down

to work and give him a long vacation. Neither of the recipients of these promises was especially enthusiastic or delighted, but in his joyous breezy fashion Beekman neither saw nor thought anything was amiss.

Never a man essayed to tread the devious paths of matrimony with a more confident assurance or a lighter heart. Nothing could surpass his blindness.

"You see," said Stephanie in a last surreptitious interview with Harnash, "he hasn't the least suspicion. He hugged me like a bear and kissed me like a battering ram," she explained with a little movement of her shoulders singularly expressive of resentment, and even more.

"Damn him," muttered Harnash, under his breath. "He wrung my hand, too, as if I were his best friend."

"Well, you are, aren't you?"

"I was, I am, and I'm going to save him from-"

"From the misfortune of marrying me?"

"I don't see how you can jest under the circumstances."

"George," said the girl, "if I didn't jest I should die. I don't see how I can endure it as it is."

"Stephanie," he repeated, lifting his right hand as if making an oath-as, indeed, he was-"I'm going to take you from him if it is at the foot of the altar."

These were brave words with back of them, as yet, only an intensity of purpose and a determination, but no practical plan. It was Bill Woywod that gave the practical turn to that decision

on the part of Harnash.

Now George Harnash came originally from a little down-east town on the Maine coast. That it was his birthplace was not its only claim to honor. It also boasted of the nativity of Bill Woywod. The two had been boyhood friends. Although their several pursuits had separated them widely, the queer friendship still obtained in spite of the wide and ever-widening difference in the characters and stations of the two men.

Running away from school, Bill Woywod had gone down to the sea as his ancestors for two hundred years had done before him. Left to himself, Harnash had completed his high school and college course and had gone down to New York as none of his people had ever done in all the family history. Both men had progressed. Harnash was already well-to-do and approaching brilliant success. He had thrust his feet at least within the portals of society and was holding open the door which he would force widely when he was a little stronger.

Woywod had earned a master's certificate and was now the first mate, technically the mate, of one of the ships of the Inter-Oceanic Trading fleet, in line for first promotion to a master. Woywod was a deep-water sailor. He cared little for steam, and although it was an age in which masts and sails were being withdrawn from the seven seas, he still affected the fast-disappearing wind-jamming branch of the ocean-carrying trade.

Indeed, the last full-rigged ship had been paid off and laid up in ordinary. Just because it was the last wooden sailing ship of the

fleet, Maynard, whose fortune had been not a little contributed to by sailing vessels in the preceding century, had refrained from selling her. There was a sentimental streak in the hard old captain of industry, as there is in most men who achieve, and the *Susquehanna* had not been broken up or otherwise disposed of. On the contrary, every care had been taken of her.

The demands of the great war brought every ocean-carrying ship into service again. The *Susquehanna* was refitted and commissioned. A retired mariner who had been more or less a failure under steam but whose seamanship was unquestioned was appointed to command. Captain Peleg Fish was one of those old-time sailors to whom moral suasion meant little or nothing. He was Gloucester born, and had served his apprenticeship in the fishing fleet. Thereafter he had been mate on the last of the old American clippers, had commanded a whaler out of New Bedford, and knew a sailing ship from truck to keelson.

He was a man of a hard heart and a heavy hand. His courage was as high as his heart was hard or his hand was heavy. He was also a driver. He drove his ship and he drove his men. He had been a success on the *Susquehanna*in her time, and because of that he had been able to get crews and keep officers. Quick passages in a well-found ship, and good pay, had offset his proverbial fierceness and brutality. He was now an old man, but sailing masters were scarce. Officers and men were scarce, too, on account of the war, and although the Inter-Oceanic Trading Company had dismissed Captain Fish because of the way he

had mishandled the steamer to which they transferred him when they laid up the *Susquehanna*, yet they were glad to call him into service when they decided again to make use of that vessel.

Grim old Captain Fish made but one condition. He was glad enough to get back to the sea on which he had passed his life on any terms, and doubly rejoiced that he could once more command a wooden sailing ship instead of "an iron pot with a locomotive in her," as he designated his last vessel. That condition was that he should have Bill Woywod for mate. The two had sailed together before. They knew each other, liked each other, worked together hand and glove, for Bill Woywod was a man of the same type as the captain. The captain was getting old, too. He wanted a stouter arm and a quicker eye at his disposal than his own. Besides, Bill hated steam as much as Fish did. He was a natural-born sailor, not a mechanic and engine driver. Among the bucko mates of the past, Bill Woywod would not have yielded second place to anybody. They had to give Woywod a master's pay to get him to ship, but once having agreed to do that, he entered upon his new duties with alacrity.

The *Susquehanna* was a big full-rigged clipper ship of three thousand tons. Given a favorable wind, she could show her heels to many a tramp steamer or lumbering freighter, and even not a few of the older liners. She was carrying arms and munitions for the Russians and ran between New York and Vladivostok through the Panama Canal.

If there was one person rough, hard-bitten Bill Woywod had

an abiding affection for, it was George Harnash. Whenever his ship dropped anchor in New York the first person-and about the only respectable person-he visited was his boyhood friend. To be sure, there was not much congeniality between them. The only tie that bound them was that boyhood friendship, but both of them were men without kith or kin, and they somehow clung to that association. Woywod was proud of his friendship with the rising young broker, and there was a kind of refreshment in the person of the breezy sailor which Harnash greatly enjoyed, especially as the visits of the seaman were not frequent or long enough to pall upon the New Yorker.

Harnash usually took an afternoon and night off when Woywod arrived. They took in the baseball game at the Polo Grounds, dined thereafter at some table d'hote resort which Harnash would never have affected under ordinary circumstances, but which seemed to Woywod the very height of luxury. Then they repaired to some theatre, usually one of the high-kicking variety avowedly designed for the tired business man, which was extremely congenial to the care-free sailor; and not to go further into details it may be alleged that they had a good time together until far in the night or early in the morning, rather. Harnash was usually not a little ashamed next morning; Woywod, never! With sturdy independence Woywod would alternate being host on these occasions. On land and out of his element he was a fairly agreeable companion in his rough, coarse way. It was only on the ship that he became a brute. In the nature of things the

devotion, if such it could be called, was all on Woywod's side. It was an aspiration on his part and a condescension on the part of Harnash, however much the latter strove to disguise it.

The *Susquehanna* had been loaded to her capacity and beyond with war equipment for the Russian Government and was about to take her departure from New York, when Woywod, who had been prevented before by the duties imposed by the necessity of getting the ship ready quickly for her next long voyage, paid his annual or semi-annual visit to his friend. Now these visits had become so thoroughly a matter of custom that Woywod had established the right of entrance. None of the clerks in the outer office would have thought of stopping him, and although Harnash was very strict in requiring respect for the sanctity of his private office Woywod made no hesitation about entering it unceremoniously.

Like all sailors, he moved with cat-like softness and quickness. He opened the door noiselessly and surprised his friend seated at his desk, his face buried in his hands in an attitude of the deepest dejection. Friendship has a discerning power as well as greater passions.

"Why, George, old boy," began Woywod, laying his hand on the other's shoulder, and that touch gave Harnash the first warning that he was not alone, "what's the matter?"

Harnash looked up quickly, rose to his feet as he recognized his visitor, and grasped him by the hand with a warmth he had not shown in years.

"Bill," he explained, "I'm in the deepest trouble that ever fell on a man, and you come like an angel in time to help me."

Harnash must have meant a dark angel, but Woywod knew nothing of that.

"What is it, old man?" he asked. "If it's money you're needin' I got a shot or two in the locker an'-"

"No, it's not money. I'm making more than ever."

"Been buckin' up agin the law an' want a free passage to safety? Well, me an' old man Fish is as thick as peas in a pod, an' the *Susquehanna's* at your service."

"It's not that, either."

"What in blazes is it, then?"

"A woman."

"Look here, George," said Woywod, "I'm about as rough as they make 'em an' there ain't no man as ever sailed with me that won't endorse that there statement, but I never done no harm to no woman an' if you've been-"

"You're on the wrong tack again, Bill," interposed Harnash, smiling. "It's a woman I love and who loves me."

"Well, I don't reckon I can help you there unless you want me to be best man at the weddin'."

That suggestion struck Harnash as intensely comical, as it well might, but he hastened to add diplomatically:

"I couldn't wish a better man if there were going to be any wedding, but-"

"Do you love a married woman?" asked Woywod, going

directly to the point.

"Not exactly."

"What d'ye mean?"

"I'll explain if you'll only give me a chance," answered Harnash, and in as few words as possible he put the sailor in possession of the facts.

"So you want to get rid of the man, do you?" he asked, when the story had been told.

"Yes. I don't want him harmed. I just want him out of the way."

"And you think that I-"

"If you can't help me I don't know who can."

"Look here, George," said Woywod, earnestly. "Is this square an' above board? Are you givin' me the truth?"

"I am."

"An' the gal loves you an' you love her an' she don't love this other chap which she wants to git out of marryin' him?"

"Right."

"Then it's easy."

"I thought you'd find a way."

"It don't take much schemin' for that. Just p'int him out to me an' git him down on the river front some dark night where I can git a hold of him, with a few drinks in him, an' that'll be all there is to it. You won't hear from him until the *Susquehanna* gits to Vladivostok, an' mebbe not then."

"I don't want any harm to come to him."

"In course not. I'll use him jest as gentle as I do any man on the ship."

"And he must never know that I-"

"He won't know nothin'. When a man gits drunk enough he can't tell what happens. You might tell yer lady friend that this is a little weddin' present I'm makin' to my oldest an' best friend, that is, if you git spliced afore I gits back from Vladivostok."

"I'll surely let her know your part of the transaction. When does the *Susquehanna* sail?"

"Thursday morning. Tide turns at two o'clock. We'll git out about four."

"You don't touch anywhere?"

"Not a place unless we're druv to it by bad weather or some accident. But if we do git hold of a cable I'll see that he stays safe aboard, in case, which ain't likely, we're obliged to drop anchor in any civilized port."

"Have you got a wireless aboard?"

"Nary wireless. When we take our departure from Fire Island it's up to Cap'n Fish an' me an' the rest of us to bring her in."

"There's no danger?"

"Well, there's always danger in sailin' the seas, but nobody never thinks nothin' about it with a good ship, well officered, well manned an' well found. It's a damn sight safer than the streets of New York with all them automobiles runnin' on the wind an' by the wind an' across the wind an' every other way at the same time. It's as much as a man's life is worth to try to navigate a street.

Never mind the danger. We've got to settle a few little details an' then the thing bein' off your mind we can have a royal good time. You ain't got anything on tonight?"

"No engagement that I can't break. If it had been tomorrow, Wednesday, it would have been different because that is the night my friend-"

"Oh, he's a friend of yourn. Why don't you tell-"

"No use, Bill; this is the only way. But because he is a friend of mine I tell you I don't want him to come to any harm or to get any bad treatment."

"If he buckles down to work an' accepts the situation he won't get no bad treatment from me."

This was perfectly honest, for in the brutal school in which he had been trained what he meted out to his men was what he had been taught was right and what he believed they indeed expected, without which indeed discipline could not be maintained and the work of the ship properly done. Harnash had some doubts as to Beekman's ability to buckle down or willingness, rather, but he had to risk something. The two friends put their heads together and the minor details were easily arranged.

"Better tell the gal it's goin' to be all right, hadn't you?" suggested Woywod.

"No," said Harnash, with a truer appreciation of the situation. "I think I'll surprise her."

"It'll be a surprise, all right," laughed the big sailor. "Well, you do your part an' I'll do mine an' if the man does his part he'll

come back to find you married an' he can make the best of it. By the way, what's his name?"

"Is it necessary that I should tell you?"

"No, 'tain't necessary an' perhaps on the whole it wouldn't be best. If I don't know his name I can call him a damn liar whatever he says it is, with a clear conscience," went on the sailor blithely and guilelessly, as if conscience really mattered to him.

CHAPTER IV
A BACHELOR'S DINNER AND ITS ENDING

Bachelors' dinners, masculine pre-nuptial festivities, that is, like everything else with which poor humanity deals, may roughly be divided into two kinds, which fall under the generic names of good or bad. Of course, in practice, as in life, goodness often degenerates into badness and badness is sometimes lifted into goodness. Such is the perversity of human nature even at its best that when the declaration is made that Beekman's bachelor dinner was a good one all interest in it is immediately lost! Bad is so much more attractive in literature and in life. Perhaps it may be said that while the dinner had not descended to the unbridled license which sometimes characterized such affairs, and while there were no ladies present in various stages of-shall it be said dress or undress-nevertheless, the young fellows who were present had a delightful time which if not as innocent as the festivities of Stephanie's final entertainment to her lovely attendants, was nevertheless quite what might have been expected from clean, healthy, well-bred young Americans with a reasonable amount of restraint.

The dinner was chosen with fine discrimination and epicurean taste; it was cooked by the best chef, served at the most exclusive

club and accompanied by wines with which even the most captious *bon vivant* could not take issue. Perhaps some of the youngsters drank more than was good for them-which instantly raises the question, how much, or how little, if any, is good for a young man? They broke up at a decently early hour in the morning in much better condition than might have been expected.

Beekman was one of the most temperate of men. He took pride in his athletic prowess and he still kept himself in fine physical trim. A very occasional glass of wine usually limited his indulgence. In this instance, however, under conditions so unusual, he had partaken so much more freely than was his wont-his course being pardonable or otherwise in accordance with the viewpoint-that he was not altogether himself. This was not much more due to the plan of Harnash than to the solicitations of the other friends who found nothing so pleasant on that occasion as drinking to his health, and generally in bumpers. Indeed, not once but many times and oft around the board they pledged him and were pledged in return.

At the insistence of Harnash, Beekman had arranged to spend the night at the former's apartment in Washington Square. Harnash made the point that he was expected to look after him and produce him the next morning in the best trim, therefore he did not wish him to get out of his sight. Accordingly, Beekman had dismissed his own car and when the party broke up about two o'clock in the morning he went away with Harnash in the

latter's limousine.

At somebody's suggestion-Beekman could never remember whose, whether it was his or his friend's-they stopped at several places on the way down town for further liquid refreshment of which Beekman partook liberally, Harnash sparingly or not at all. It was not difficult for an adroit man like Harnash, confronted by a rather befuddled man like Beekman, to introduce the infallible knock-out drops, with which he had been provided by Woywod, into the liquor.

As they crossed Twenty-third Street on their way down town Harnash stopped the car. His chauffeur lived on East Twenty-third Street, and Harnash dismissed him, saying he would drive the car down to his private garage back of his residence in Washington Mews himself. There was nothing unusual in this; the chauffeur subsequently testified that he had received the same thoughtful consideration from his employer on many previous occasions. When the chauffeur left the car, the drug had not yet got in its deadly work. Beekman was still all right apparently and the chauffeur subsequently testified that when Beekman bade him good-night he noticed nothing strikingly unusual. Beekman seemed to be himself, although the chauffeur could see that he was slightly under the influence of wine.

By the time the car, driven by Harnash with considerable ostentation and as much notice as possible, for he wanted to attract attention to his arrival, reached the garage, Beekman was absolutely unconscious on the floor of the tonneau, to which

he had fallen. Harnash ran the car into the garage, closed the doors with a bang, and ran across the intervening court rapidly and noisily and up to his own apartments. He was ordinarily a considerate young man, and coming in at that hour he would have made as little noise as possible, but on this occasion his conduct was different. He stumbled on the stairs, banged the door behind him, fell over a chair in his room, swore audibly. People subsequently testified that they had heard him coming in and one even saw him, quite alone.

Without pausing an unnecessary moment in the room he made his exit from his apartment by means of the fire escape, and this time not a cat could have moved more silently. Fortunately, the back of the house was in deep shadow and there were no lights adjacent. The shadow of the fence also served him. He reentered the garage, having taken precaution the day before secretly to oil the doors. He dragged his unfortunate friend and companion from the limousine, stripped him of his overcoat and automobile cap, which he put on himself. The coat he had previously worn had differed in every particular from that of Beekman. He removed Beekman's watch and other jewelry and his money, of which he carried a considerable sum. These articles he stowed away in his private locker to which his chauffeur did not have a key. He could remove them to his office safe at his leisure. In Beekman's vest pocket he put a large roll of his own money-he could not steal, though abduction was his intent-and then he lifted him to the floor of his runabout which stood in the

garage by the side of the limousine.

He next removed the number plates from the car, replaced them with false ones, and ran the car out of the garage by hand. Every part of it had been oiled so that its movement was absolutely noiseless. Then he shoved the car down the street, which was now deserted, until he got some distance away from the garage. The only really risky part of the enterprise was at that moment. Fortune favored him-or not, as the case may be. At any rate, no one appeared. It was after three o'clock in the morning, the street was deserted, and there was not a policeman in sight. He climbed into the car, started it, and drove off.

He proceeded cautiously at first, seeking unfrequented and narrow streets until he got far enough from the garage to change his going to suit his purpose. After a time he sought the broader streets and passed several people, mostly police officers, but them he now took no care to avoid. He drove near them so that they would notice his general build, which was that of his friend, and the clothes he wore, which were those of his friend, and indeed they testified afterward that they had seen a man dressed as and looking like Beekman, exactly as he had anticipated. He drove past them rapidly so as not to give them time for too close a scrutiny. Also he doubled on his trail often.

When he reached a dark, lonely, and unfrequented block near South Water Street he drew up before the door of a dimly lighted, forbidding looking building, the sign on which indicated that it was a sailors' boarding house. He got out of the car, taking

precaution to slip on a false mustache and beard with which he had provided himself, and tapped on a door in a certain way which had been indicated to him. The door was at once opened by a burly, rough, villainous looking individual, the boarding house master, obviously a crimp of the worst class.

"What d'ye want?" he growled out, scrutinizing the newcomer by the aid of a gas jet burning inside the dirty, reeking hall, whose feeble light he supplemented by a flash from an electric torch which really revealed little, since Harnash carefully concealed his already disguised face.

"I have something for Mr. Woywod."

"The mate of the *Susquehanna*?"

"Yes."

"Well, he told me to receive an' deliver what you got."

"That was our agreement," said Harnash, the little dialogue convincing each man that no doubt was to be entertained of the other.

"Well, where's the goods?"

"In the car."

"Fetch him in."

"He's rather heavy. Perhaps you'll give me a hand."

"Oh, all right," answered the man, putting his electric torch in his pocket.

The two went to the car and the man easily picked up the unconscious Beekman and unaided carried him within the door. Harnash followed. He observed the man glanced at the numbers

on the car and was glad that he had taken the precaution to change them. The crimp now dropped the unconscious Beekman in the hallway and turned to Harnash. He found the latter standing quietly, but with an automatic pistol in his hand.

"You needn't be afraid of me," said the man.

"I'm not," answered Harnash. He was ghastly pale and extremely nervous, but not from fear of the crimp. "This is just a matter of precaution."

"Well, what do I git out of this yere job?" asked the man.

"I understand Mr. Woywod will settle with you for that."

"Well, he does, but what I gits from him is the price of a foremast hand, an' 'tain't enough."

The crimp bent over Beekman, flashed the light on him, and pulled out the roll of bills, which he quickly counted.

"It's fair, but I'd ought to git more. This here's a swell job; look at them clo'es."

"They're yours also, if you wish."

"That's somethin', but-"

"It's all you'll get," said Harnash, laying his hand on the door.

The man lifted the torch. Harnash lifted the pistol.

"Just put that torch back in your pocket," he said.

"You're a cool one," laughed the man, but he obeyed the order.

"If it is learned tomorrow that this man has disappeared you'll receive through the United States mail in a plain envelope a hundred dollar bill. If not, you get nothing."

"Suppose I croak him, how'd you know anything about it?"

"Mr. Woywod has arranged to inform me, and he will also put your part of the transaction on record, so if you say a word you'll be laid by the heels and get nothing for your pains. There are a number of things against you, I'm told. The police would be most happy to get you, I know. Just bear that in mind."

The man nodded. He knew when the cards were stacked against him. After all, this did not greatly differ from an ordinary job and he was getting, for him, very well paid for his part of it.

"I got relations with Woywod an' lots of other seafarin' men. My business would be ruined if I played tricks on 'em. You can trust me to keep quiet."

"I thought so," answered Harnash. "Good-night."

He opened the door, stepped outside, closed the door behind him, and waited a moment, but the crimp made no effort to follow him. After all, it was only an every day matter with him. Harnash next drove the car down the street near one of the wharves, where he met Woywod.

"Is it all right, George?" asked the latter.

"All right, Bill. He's at the place you told me to leave him. Can you keep the crimp's mouth shut?"

"Trust me for that," said Woywod confidently. "He's mixed up in too many shady transactions to give anybody any information."

"I'll never forget what you've done for me," said Harnash. "Remember, use him well."

"No fear," laughed his friend as the two shook hands and parted.

Then Harnash drove up the street, waited until he came to a dark alley, turned into it, unobserved, got out of the car, put Beekman's coat and hat into it, donned his own overcoat and cap, which he had brought with him, and still wearing the false mustache and beard changed the numbers on the car, started it, and let it wreck itself against the nearest water hydrant.

It was a long walk up town, even to Washington Square, and he had to go very circumspectly because he did not now wish to be seen by anyone. Again fortune favored him. He gained the garage, crossed the court, mounted the fire escape to his rooms, and sank down, utterly exhausted but triumphant.

His defense was absolutely impregnable. No one could controvert his story. He rehearsed it. He had come home with Beekman after the dinner had terminated. They had had one or two drinks on the way. They had dismissed the chauffeur at Twenty-third Street. When they reached the garage Beekman, moved by some sudden whim, had insisted upon going back to his own apartment up town in Harnash's little roadster. He had been drinking, of course. He was not altogether in possession of his normal faculties, but Harnash was in the same condition and therefore he had not been too insistent. Beekman was as capable of driving the car as Harnash had just showed himself to be. There was nothing he could do to prevent Beekman from going away. He could not even remember, when he was questioned, whether he had tried it or not. At any rate, Beekman had gone away in the roadster and Harnash had gone to bed. So dwellers in

the building who heard him come in testified. One who happened to go to the window even had seen him come in. No one had seen or heard him go out. Harnash swore that he had not left the apartment until the next morning.

Beekman, or a man dressed as he was known to be dressed, had been seen by the police officers and others between three or four in the morning, driving through the lower part of the city in a small car the number of which no one had seen. What he was doing in that section of the city no one could imagine. During the course of the morning Harnash's car was found, badly smashed from a collision, lying on its side in a wretched alley off South Water Street. Beekman's overcoat and cap were in the car and that was all there was to it.

No matter what suspicions the crimp might have entertained, he kept his mouth shut and received the day after the one hundred dollar bill in an unmarked envelope which had been mailed at the general postoffice in the afternoon. Even if he had spoken, he could not have thrown much light on the situation. Not even the reward which was offered could tempt him. His business demanded secrecy, absolutely and inviolable, and too many men knew too much about him, which rendered it unsafe for him to open his head. He would not kill the goose that laid the golden egg for him by making further business on the same lines impossible. He really knew nothing, anyway.

The secret was shared between two men, Woywod on the sea and out of communication with New York, and Harnash

himself. So long as they kept quiet no one would ever know. Even Beekman himself could not solve the mystery when he returned to New York. It was most ingeniously planned and most brilliantly carried out. Harnash congratulated himself. Stephanie Maynard would certainly be his long before Beekman could prevent it. Still, George Harnash was by no means so happy in the present state of affairs as he had planned and hoped to be. And his trials were not over. He had to meet Stephanie, the wedding party, old John Maynard, the public press, and the public-what would the day bring forth?

CHAPTER V
THE WEDDING THAT WAS NOT

Stephanie Maynard had passed a sleepless night. Her love for George Harnash grew stronger and her abhorrence of the marriage increased in the same degree as the hour drew nearer. Too late she repented of her determination. She wondered why she had not allowed Harnash to take her away and end it all. What, after all, were her father's wishes, or her own promises, or the worldly advantages they would gain, or anything else, compared to love?

Harnash had sent word to her the day before that she was not to give up hope, that something would happen surely, but now the last minute was at hand and nothing had happened. A dozen times she started to call her lover on the telephone and a dozen times she refrained. Finally the hour arrived when the victim must be garlanded for the sacrifice. At least, that is the way she regarded it.

She had not heard a word from her husband-to-be during the morning. Under other circumstances that would have alarmed her, but as it was she was only relieved. The wedding party was assembled at the brand new Maynard mansion on upper Fifth Avenue. Two of the attendants were school friends from other cities and they were guests at the house. The wedding was to be followed by a breakfast and a great reception which the

Maynard money and the Beekman position was to make the most wonderful affair of the kind that had ever been given in New York.

With the publicity which modern society courts and welcomes, while it pretends to deprecate it, the papers had published reams about the most private details of the engagement, even to descriptions and pictures of the most intimate under-linen of the bride. Presents of fabulous value, which lost nothing in their description by perfervid pens, were under constant guard in the mansion. Details of police kept back swarms of unaccredited reporters and adventurous sightseers. On the morning of the wedding day the street before the Cathedral was packed with the vulgarly curious long before eleven o'clock. The wedding was to be solemnized at high noon, and was to be the greatest social event which had excited easily aroused and intensely curious New York for a year or more.

The newer members of the exclusive social circle frankly enjoyed it. And such is the contagion of degeneration that the older members, while they affected disdain and annoyance, enjoyed it too. The newspapers had played it up tremendously, and the affair had even achieved the signal triumph of a veiled but well understood cartoon by F. Foster Lincoln, the scourge and satirist of high society, in a recent number of *Life*.

Everything was ready. The most famous caterer in New York had prepared the most sumptuous wedding breakfast. The most exclusive florist had decorated the church and residence. Society

had put on its best clothes, slightly deploring the fact that as it was to be a noon wedding its blooming would be somewhat limited thereby. More tickets had been issued to the Cathedral than even that magnificent edifice could hold and it was filled to its capacity so soon as the doors were opened. The famous choir was in attendance to render a musical program of extraordinary beauty and appropriateness.

As it approached the hour of mid-day the excitement was intense. Women in the crowd were crushed, many fainted. Riot calls had to be sent out and the already strong detachment of police supplemented by reserves. Thus is the holy state of matrimony entered into among the busy rich. With the idle poor it is, fortunately, a simpler affair.

It had been arranged that Derrick Beekman and George Harnash should present themselves at the Maynard mansion not later than eleven o'clock. From there they would drive to the Cathedral in plenty of time to receive the wedding party at the chancel steps. At eleven o'clock a big motor forced its way through the crowd and drew up before the door. From it descended George Harnash alone.

That young man showed the effect of the night he had passed. He was excessively nervous and as gray as the gloves he carried in his hands. He was admitted at once and ushered into the drawing room, which was filled with a dozen young ladies in raiment which even Solomon in all his glory might have envied, who were to make up the wedding party. There also had just arrived the

young gentlemen who were to accompany them, who had all been at the bachelor dinner. None of them exhibited any evidence of unusual dissipation. They had slept late and were in excellent condition.

"George, alone!" cried young Van Brunt, who was next in importance to the best man, as Harnash entered the room.

"Where's Beekman?" asked Harnash apparently in great surprise, as he glanced at the little group.

"Not here. You were to bring him. It's time for us to get up to the Cathedral anyway. I'll bet the people are clamoring at the doors now."

"They weren't to be opened till eleven-fifteen," said Grant, one of the fittest members of the party. "It's only eleven now. We've plenty of time."

"Well, you better beat it up now, then. Beekman will be here in a minute, I'm sure," said Harnash. "We'll follow you in half an hour."

As the young men who were to usher left the room the girls fell upon Harnash.

"Mr. Harnash," said Josephine Treadway, who was the maid-of-honor, "will you please tell us where Derrick Beekman is, and why you didn't bring him along?"

"I can't," said Harnash. "As a matter of fact I-"

"You'll tell me, certainly," interposed the voice that he loved.

He turned and found that Stephanie, having completed her toilet, had descended the stair and entered the room. She was

whiter than Harnash himself, but her lack of color was infinitely becoming to her in her sumptuous bridal robes, and the adoring young man decided then and there that whatever happened she was worth it.

"Mr. Beekman," continued the girl, "was to be here at eleven o'clock with you. It's after that now and you're here alone. Where is he? Why didn't you bring him?"

"Miss Maynard," said Harnash formally, and in spite of himself he could not prevent his lip from trembling, "I don't know where he is."

"What!" exclaimed the girl, really astonished, as the whole assembly broke into exclamations. Had Harnash accomplished the impossible, as he had threatened?

"I can't find him," went on Harnash. He could scarcely sustain Stephanie's direct and piercing gaze. He forced himself to look at her, however. "I don't know where he is," he repeated.

"But have you searched?"

"Everywhere. I called up his apartment on Park Avenue at ten o'clock. They said he wasn't there and hadn't been there all night. I started my man out at once in a taxicab, jumped into my own car, and I've been everywhere-the office, his clubs-I've even had my secretary and clerks telephone all the hotels on the long chance that he might be at one of them."

"And you haven't found a trace of him? George Harnash-" began Stephanie, but Harnash was too quick for her; he did not allow her to finish.

"You will forgive me," he went on; "I did even more than that in my alarm. I finally notified the police on the chance that he might have been er-er-brought in."

He shot a warning look at Stephanie that checked further inquiries from her.

"Why should he be brought in?" asked Josephine Treadway, who had no reason for not asking the question.

"Why, you see," went on Harnash, "it's desperately hard to tell, and I'd rather die than mention it, but under the circumstances I suppose-"

"Out with it at once," cried Stephanie.

"Well, we had a little dinner last night at-well, never mind where."

"We had a dinner, too," said Josephine.

"Yes, but I imagine ours was-er-different. At any rate, it didn't break up until quite late, or, I should say, early in the morning, and we were not-quite ourselves."

"But Derrick is the most abstemious of men."

"Exactly; so am I, and when that kind go under it's worse than-you understand," he added helplessly.

Stephanie nodded.

"When did you see him last?"

"Why-er-I'll make a clean breast of it."

"Do so, I beg you."

"Well, then, we were right enough when the dinner broke up. Derrick and I left the others to their own devices. He had

arranged to spend the night with me. We stopped at one or two places down town, but reached my quarters in Washington Square about two or three o'clock."

Harnash paused and swallowed hard. It was an immensely difficult task to which he had compelled himself, although so far he had told nothing but the truth.

"Go on," said Josephine Treadway impatiently as the pause lengthened.

"He changed his mind after we put the limousine in the garage and insisted on going back to his own rooms."

"Did you let him go?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"Well, Miss Treadway, I couldn't help it, and, to be frank, I didn't try. You see we were neither of us very sure of ourselves and-and-"

"I see."

"He took my runabout, drove off and-that's all."

"Have you found the runabout?"

"Yes, the police found it in an alley near South Water Street, badly smashed. Beekman's overcoat and cap were in the car."

"Do you think he has been hurt?" questioned Stephanie, who had listened breathlessly to the conversation between her lover and her maid-of-honor.

"I'm sure that he can't have been," returned Harnash with definiteness which carried conviction to his questioner, and no

one else caught the meaning look he shot at her.

"And that's all?" asked Josephine.

"Absolutely all I can tell you," he replied truthfully, none noticing the equivoke but Stephanie, who of course could not call attention to it.

"You poor girl," said Josephine, gathering Stephanie in her arms.

"It's outrageous. It's horrible," cried the girl, biting her lip to keep back her tears.

She really could scarcely tell whether she was glad or sorry, now that it had come; not that her feelings had changed, but there was the public scandal, the affront, the-but she had not time to speculate.

"What is outrageous, what is horrible?" asked John Maynard, coming into the room and catching her words. "What can be outrageous or horrible in such a wedding as we have arranged? Why, Stephanie, what's the matter? You're as white as a sheet, and Harnash, are you ill? You're a pretty looking spectacle for a best man."

"Father," said his daughter, "they can't find Derrick."

"Can't find him!" exclaimed Maynard. "Does he have to be sought for on his wedding day? If I were going to marry a stunning girl like you, for all you're as pale as a ghost, I-"

"There's not going to be any wedding," said Stephanie, mechanically.

"No wedding!" roared Maynard, surprised intensely. "What

do you mean? Are you backing out at the last minute?"

"No, it's not I."

"Look here, will some one explain this mystery to me?" asked the man, turning to the rather frightened bevy of girls. "It's eleven-thirty; we ought to be starting. What's the meaning of this infernal foolishness? You, Harnash, what are you standing there looking like a ghost for? One would think you were going to be married yourself."

"Mr. Maynard," said Josephine, taking upon herself the task, "Stephanie has told you the truth. Mr. Harnash has just come and he doesn't know where Mr. Beekman is."

"Doesn't know where he is?"

"He can't be found, sir," said Harnash.

"Do you mean to tell me that he has run away and left my girl in the lurch? By God, he'll-"

"I'm sure it isn't that," said Harnash earnestly, "but the fact is we had a bachelor dinner last night."

"Of course you did, but what has that to do with it?"

"Everything. I guess we indulged a little too much."

"Well, bachelors have done that fool thing since time and the world began."

"Yes, but Beekman hasn't been seen since early this morning, two or three o'clock."

"Who saw him last?"

"I did," said Harnash, briefly repeating his explanation.

"What did you do?"

"I 'phoned to his house and they said he hadn't been there all night. I dressed, sent my man out in a taxi, took my own car, summoned the office force to my assistance, and Dougherty's detectives, and I've scoured the city for him."

"The police?"

"I have notified them, of course, as soon as they reported the finding of my runabout. They're on the hunt, too. We have even called up every hotel in the city. He's not to be found."

"It must be foul play," said Maynard, taking Harnash's account of it at its face value.

"I suppose so," said Harnash, wincing a little, although he would fain not, and again shooting a quick glance at Stephanie, and then daringly following it with a quick gesture of negation to reassure her.

"Where that car was found it wouldn't take much to interest a thief."

"No. He had a watch, jewelry, money. Indeed, I have a dim remembrance of his flashing a roll in some place or other."

"That will be it."

"Meanwhile what is to be done, sir?"

"It's a quarter to twelve now," said Josephine Treadway.

"God, how I hate this," said old Maynard. "Here," he stepped to the door and called his private secretary, "Bentley, drive up to the Cathedral like mad, tell the Bishop that the wedding is called off. Yes, don't stand there like a fish; get out."

"But we'll have to give some reason to the people, explain to

the guests in the church," expostulated the secretary.

"Reason be damned," said Maynard, roughly.

"Excuse me," said Harnash, "it would be better for all concerned, and especially Miss Maynard, if the matter were explained at once, and fully. You wouldn't like to have anyone think for a moment that she had been left in the lurch."

"Mr. Harnash is right, sir. It must be explained as well as it can."

"Very well, Bentley," said his employer. "Tell the Bishop that Mr. Beekman has disappeared, that we are of the opinion that he has met with foul play, that under the circumstances there is nothing to do but call off the wedding and have the explanation announced in the Cathedral in any way he likes, and then get back here as quickly as possible. Stephanie, I'd rather have lost half my fortune than have this happen, but keep up your courage. I feel that nothing but some dastardly work would have kept Beekman away. He is the soul of honor and he was passionately devoted to you. Don't faint, my dear girl."

"I'm not going to faint," said Stephanie, resolutely. "Girls, I'm awfully sorry for your disappointment," she faltered.

"Don't mind us," said Josephine.

"I'm afraid that perhaps you-you-"

"We're going at once," explained one of the bridesmaids, "if you will have our motors called up."

"Of course," said Maynard. "Harnash, you attend to that and then come to me in the library. William," he added to the

footman who came in obedience to his summons, "get me the chief of police on the telephone and when the reporters come, and they will be here just as soon as the announcement is made at the church, show them into the library in a body. I've got to see them and I'll see them all at once. Harnash, you come, too. You can tell the story better than anyone."

CHAPTER VI
STEPHANIE IS GLAD AFTER ALL

The sudden disappearance of one of the principals in the Maynard-Beekman wedding was the sensation of the hour. John Maynard was deeply hurt and terribly concerned because he was very fond of Beekman, and because in spite of his bold front the young man's failure to appear had reflected upon his daughter. The lewd papers of the baser sort, playing up the bachelor dinner, did not hesitate to point this out, and insinuations, so thinly disguised that every one who read understood, appeared daily. That there was not a word of truth in them was of little consequence either to the writers who knew they were lying or to the public, which did not. The clientele of such papers was ready to believe anything or everything bad; especially of the idle rich.

Reportorial and even editorial-which is worse-imagination was unrestrained. As the newspapers had devoted so much space to the preparations, they did not stint themselves in discussing the aftermath of the affair. The police bent every energy to solve the mystery. Maynard was a big power in public affairs and they were stimulated by a reward of one hundred thousand dollars which Maynard offered for tidings of the missing man, a reward which made the wiseacres put their tongues in their cheeks as they read of it.

The gorgeous wedding presents were returned. The lovely

lingerie of the bride, which had been so talked about, was laid away and the bride herself was denied to every caller. Even George Harnash sought access to her person in vain. The scandal, the humiliation, had made her seriously ill, and by her physician's orders she was allowed to see no one.

However, the first person she did admit was George Harnash. Indeed, so soon as she was able to be about she called him up and demanded his immediate presence. He had been waiting for such a summons. He knew it was unavoidable. It had to come. He dropped everything to go to her. He was horrified when he saw her. He had got back some of his nerve and equipoise to the casual observation, although he still showed what he had gone through to a close scrutiny. He had been catechized and cross-questioned, even put through a mild form of the third degree by the police, but little to their satisfaction. He could tell them nothing definite. They got no more out of him than he had volunteered at first. They were completely and entirely mystified.

Several steamers had sailed for various ports that day and night, but it was easily established, when they reached port, that they had not carried the missing man. They completely overlooked the *Susquehanna* for reasons which will appear. Beekman's disappearance remained one of those unexplained mysteries for which New York was notorious. The reward still stood and the authorities were still very much on the alert, but they were absolutely without any clue whatsoever. Derrick Beekman had disappeared from the face of the earth. Besides

Harnash, there was only one person in the city who had any definite idea as to the cause of his departure, and that was Stephanie Maynard. A proud, high-spirited girl, she had suffered untold anguish in the publicity and scandal and innuendo.

"My God, Stephanie!" cried Harnash, as she received him in a lovely negligée in her boudoir. "You look like death itself."

"And I have passed through it," said the girl, "in the last week. Now, I want you to tell me where Derrick is."

"Stephanie," answered Harnash, "it would be foolish for me to pretend that I don't know."

"It certainly would."

"I told you that I meant to have you and that I would stop the wedding if I had to take you from the altar steps."

"But we didn't get that far."

"It amounts to the same thing. I-er-took him. It was easier."

"Where and how did you take him?"

"Don't ask. I can't tell."

"And you have covered me with shame inexpressible. I shall never get over it as long as I live. How could you do it? How could you?"

"Are you reproaching me?"

"Reproaching you!" cried Stephanie. "Do you think I could tamely endure this public scandal, this abandonment, without a word?"

"But I did it for you."

"Yes, I suppose so, but that doesn't make it any less

humiliating."

"Stephanie, tell me, do you love Derrick Beekman?"

"No, I hate him."

"And me?"

"I hate you, too."

"Oh, don't say that."

"I wish I were dead," cried the girl. "I can never go out on the street again. I can never hold up my head anywhere any more, and it's your fault. What have you done with him?"

"Do you want him back? Do you want to go through with the marriage? Look here," said Harnash, "desperate diseases require desperate remedies. I'll tell you this, and that is all I will tell you. I am sure Derrick is all right. He will come to no harm."

"Are you holding him a prisoner somewhere?"

"I am not."

"I don't understand."

"It is better not. It isn't necessary," answered Harnash stubbornly.

"And you actually made away with him?"

"I got him out of the way, if that's what you mean. But he's alive, well, and in no danger. I caused it to be done-"

"Are you sure of that?"

"Absolutely."

"Don't you know that you've done a criminal act?"

"Of course I know it. Do you think I'm a fool because I'm crazy in love with you?"

"And don't you know you will have gained his eternal enmity and the enmity of my father when they find this out?"

"I don't care about anybody's enmity unless it's yours."

"Well, you've almost gained mine."

"Almost, but not quite. You feel horribly now. I understand. Do you think it has been joyful to me to have put my best friend out of the way and to have brought all this scandal and shame upon you? But there was no other way. You're mine in the sight of God and I'm going to make you mine in the sight of men."

"But my father will never forgive you when he knows."

"I don't think he will ever find out my part, or Beekman either."

"Why not?"

"I can't explain, but if your father does find out what can he do? In six months I'll be independent of anything and anybody and when we are married we can laugh at him and at the rest of the world."

"At Beekman, too?"

"Yes, even at him. Stephanie, you don't know what it is to love as I do. For you I'd stop at nothing short of murder. You didn't believe me when I said that, but I meant it. I've made myself a criminal, I admit, but for your sake. Now am I going to fail of my reward? Do you want me to produce Derrick Beekman? Do you want him to come back and throw me in jail and marry you? Well, I didn't expect it; I didn't count upon it-" this was only a bluff, of course, since by no means could Harnash have got back

Beekman from the *Susquehanna* then-"but if that is what you really want say the word. Can you turn down a love like mine, that will stop at nothing for your happiness? I swear to you that I believe it is as much for your happiness as my own. I won't say it is all for you, because I want you, but I am thinking of you all the time. I couldn't bear to see you in his arms. What is the little bit of scandal? It will be forgotten. When you are my wife I'll take care of you. If you don't want to live here we'll live anywhere. If I pull off two or three big deals that are in the air I'll be able to do anything. Oh, Stephanie, you aren't going back on me now?"

"You know that I couldn't do that," answered the girl, greatly moved by his passionate pleading. After all, she did love this man and not the other.

"You're the kind of woman that a man will do anything for. I'm sorry for Beekman, I'm sorry for everything, but I'm going to have you." He came close to her as he spoke. "Do you understand that?" he asked, raising his voice. "I did it for you, you, and no man shall balk me of my reward. If you won't come willingly, you shall come unwillingly."

"Oh," said the girl, "how horribly determined and wicked you are, and yet-"

As she looked up at him the passion with which he spoke, rough, brutal as it was, quickened again her heart that she thought was dead. For the first time in weeks the color rushed into her face.

"That's right," said Harnash, watching her narrowly. "I can

still bring the blood to your cheeks."

He bent over her, he dragged her almost rudely from her seat and crushed her against him. He kissed her as roughly as he had spoken.

"This," he said, "pays for everything. If I'm found out, if I have to go to jail, I don't care. I'm glad. You love me. You can't deny it and in your heart of hearts you're glad and you'll be gladder every hour of your life."

The girl gave up. After all, what possibility of happiness did she have except with Harnash? More and more she appeared before the world as a thing cast off and scorned. Harnash's position in society and business was improving every day, but it was not that which influenced her. She really loved him. She responded to his pleading. Mistaken though he was, vicious as had been his design, that effort, wrong as was his method, showed her how much he loved her.

"You're not going to fail me now, are you? You need not answer. I can feel it in the beat of your heart against mine."

"No," said the girl. "I'm yours, I suppose."

"Don't you know?"

"Yes, I know. No one else would want me, discarded."

"I want you. I'd want you if the whole world rejected you."

"And you won't tell me where Derrick is?"

"No, it's a heavy secret to carry in one's breast. I feared that they would worm it out of me. You can't know what I've gone through," he went on. "I've been suspected and questioned and

cross-questioned, but I never gave it away. It was you who kept me up. The thought of you always, you, you, you! Meanwhile I'm slaving my life out, almost wrecking my brain, to carry out these big deals, and when it is over and I have you they can do their worst. Your father, Beekman when he comes back-"

"Oh, then he will come back?"

"Of course he will. And I'll face them all. I don't know whether I have damned myself for you or not, but if I have, I don't care," he went on recklessly.

"It was my fault, anyway," said the girl. "I should have been stronger. I should not have agreed to such a marriage, and I should not have kept the agreement when I loved you."

"You need not say that," said Harnash-there was good stuff in him-"It is all my own plan and scheme. You were bound, and there was only one way to break the bond. Now I give myself six months. By that time the talk will have died out and we will be married."

"I'll marry you," said the girl, "or I'll marry no one else on earth, but before I marry you you must bring Derrick Beekman into my presence and he must release me."

"That is a harder thing than what I have done, but I'll do it. Provided you will help me."

"I will, but how?"

"When you see him you must tell him that you don't love him and that you wish to marry me."

"Very well. I'll do that part."

"And I'll do the other."

"Promise me, on your word of honor."

"Honor!" exclaimed Harnash bitterly. "Do you think, after what I have done, that I've got any honor, that you could trust to?"

"I'll be trusting myself to you," said the girl, "and you know what that implies."

"Say that you are glad that it has happened as it has, despite the scandal."

Stephanie looked at him a long time.

"You poor boy," she said, drawing his head down and kissing his forehead in that motherly way which all women have toward the men they love until the maternal affection has a chance to vent itself in the right direction. "How you must have suffered for me."

"It was nothing."

"Yes, I am glad," she said at last.

CHAPTER VII
UP AGAINST IT HARD

When he went to bed, what time it was when he awakened, or where he was at that moment were facts about which Derrick Beekman had no ideas whatsoever. At first he was conscious of but one thing-that he was; and that consciousness was painful, not to say harrowing, to the last degree. For one thing, he was horribly sick. The place where he lay appeared to be as unsteady as his mental condition was uncertain. He was heaved up and down, tossed back and forth, and rolled from side to side in an utterly inexplicable way to his bewildered mind. And every mad motion threw him against some bruised and painful portion of his anatomy.

As he struggled to open his eyes it seemed to him that he was lying in pitch darkness. His ears were assailed by a concatenation of discordant noises, creaks, groans, thunderous blows of which he could make nothing. No one has ever pictured hell as a place of reeking odors and hideous sounds. Why that opportunity has been neglected is not known. Certainly the popular brimstone idea of it is highly suggestive. At any rate, the bad air and other indescribable odors, to say nothing of the noises that came to him, added to his physical perturbation and wretchedness. Under the circumstances, the wonder was not so much that he did not think clearly, but that he could think at all. It was only after some

moments of sickening return to consciousness that he became convinced that he was alive and somewhere.

He lay for a little while desperately trying to solve the problems presented to him by his environment, with but little immediate success. Finally, as a help toward clearing up the mystery, he decided upon exploration. Though the undertaking was painful to him, he made an effort to sit up. His head came in violent contact with something which he had not noticed in the obscurity above him and nearly knocked him senseless again. After another violent fit of sickness, he decided upon a more circumspect investigation.

He felt about with his hands and discovered that he was in some box-like enclosure one side of which seemed to be open save for a containing strip against which he had been violently hurled several times and which had prevented him from being thrown out. This enclosure was in violently agitated motion. At first, in his confusion, he decided vaguely upon a railroad train, a sleeping-car berth, but he realized that not even the roughest freight car would produce such an effect as that unless the train were running on the cross ties, in which case its stoppage would be immediate. This pitching and tossing kept on. If he had been in his clear senses, he would have known in an instant where he was, but it was only after violent effort at concentration that his aching head told him that he must be aboard a ship!

He was familiar with steamers of the more magnificent class, and with his own yacht, and the pleasure craft of his friends,

and he knew enough from reading to decide that this was the forecastle of a ship. He decided that it was a wooden ship. The outer planking against which he lay was of wood. He listened next for the beat or throb of a screw, and heard none. Thinking more and more clearly, it came to him that it was a sailing ship. As his eyes became used to the obscurity, he saw abaft his feet and to his left hand, for he lay head to the bows, well forward on the port side, a square of light which betokened an open hatchway. He strained his eyes up through the hatchway. He could make out nothing. It was still daylight on deck, and that was all he could decide.

As he lay staring stupidly, above the roar of the wind, and the creaking and groaning of the straining ship and the thunder of great waves against the bow as she plunged into the head seas, he heard harsh voices. The tramping of many feet, hurried, irregular, came to him; then a sudden silence; a command followed, and again the massed and steady trampling of the same feet. A shrill, harsh-creaking sound followed, as of taut rope straining through the dry sheaves of a heavy block. Rude rhythmical sounds, sailors' chanties, penetrated the wooden cave in one of the recesses of which he lay. It was a sailing ship, obviously. They were mast-heading yards; apparently setting or taking in sail.

What ship, and how came he aboard? By this time he was sufficiently himself to come to a decision. He would get out of that berth. He would mount the ladder, the top of which he could

see dimly nearest the hatch-combing, and get out on deck.

He thrust one leg over the side of the berth, and as the dim light fell upon it, he discovered that he was barefoot. It had not yet occurred to him to examine his clothes. Being asleep, he would naturally be wearing the luxurious night gear he affected. Not so in this instance. Where the white of his leg stopped he discerned a fringe of ragged trousers. He felt them. They were tattered and torn, and indescribably foul and dirty. Mystery on mystery! Cautiously, so as not to hit his head a second time, he sat up and lowered himself to the deck. Continuing his inspection, he was horrified at the shirt which covered the upper half of his body, and which fully matched the trousers. Where were the clothes he had worn the night before?

It came upon him like the proverbial flash of lightning from a clear sky-that bachelor supper, the gay revelry, the wine he had drunk, his sallying forth with George Harnash. He vaguely remembered their first stop; after that-nothing. Where were his watch, his studs, his money? He looked around carefully, with a faint hope that he might see them. A dress suit was, of course, an absurdity at that hour and in that place, but anything was better than those filthy rags. There was nothing to be seen of them, of course.

The horror and unpleasantness of the place grew upon him. Lest he should give way to another tearing fit of sickness, he must get up on deck. Clothes would come later, and explanations. He staggered aft toward the foot of the ladder, the violent motion

of the ship-and in his place, in the very eyes of her, the motion was worst-making progress difficult. It was not that he lacked sea legs, nor was he merely seasick. His unsteadiness and nausea came from other causes.

As he put his foot on the ladder, like another flash came the recollection that this was his wedding day. He was, indeed, a day out in his reckoning, but that was to develop later. He stopped, petrified at the appalling thought. His wedding day, and he in this guise on a ship! He groaned with horror, clapping his hands to his face, and the next roll threw him violently against the ladder, opening a cut in his head so that the blood began to trickle down the side of his cheek.

This seemed to have a good effect upon him. The blow, as it were, dissipated some of his imaginings. It was an assault that quickened the working of his mind. He rose to the provocative stimulus of it. He got to his feet, brushed the blood out of his eyes, mounted the ladder, and stepped over the hatch-combing.

He found himself on the deck of a large, old-fashioned, full-rigged sailing ship. A lookout paced across the deck from side to side forward. Way aft he saw a flying bridge just forward of the mizzenmast, on which two officers stood. A number of men had tailed on to what he realized were the foretops'l halliards, upon which they were swaying violently, constantly urged to greater exertions by a big, rough-looking man who stood over them. From time to time they broke into a rude chant, in order to apply their efforts unitedly and rhythmically to the task of raising the

foretops'l yard, the sail of which had just been double reefed. The men who had performed that task were tumbling down from aloft on the shrouds on either side. Although he was an amateur sailor, Beekman was familiar enough with ships to realize much of what was going on.

It was a raw, rough day. There was a bite in the wind which struck cold upon his unaccustomed body through his rags. It was already blowing a half gale, with a fine promise of coming harder, apparently, and they were reducing the canvas. As the ship was by the wind, sheets of cold spray swept across the already wet decks.

While he stared, the men stopped jigging on the foretops'l halliards. They were belayed, and at the mate's command the crew lined up on the main tops'l halliards, ready to sway away at command, while those topmen, whose business it was to handle the canvas on the mainmast, sprang up on the sheer poles and rapidly ascended the ratlines.

In all these movements, which appeared confused, but which were not, Beekman had stood unnoticed, but he was not to escape attention much longer. The man who had been directing the men on the halliards caught sight of him as they were belayed. He turned and walked forward.

"Here, you sojer," he began roughly, "what in hell do you mean by standin' aroun' here doin' nothin'?"

"Are you talking to me?"

"Who else would I be talkin' to? D'ye think I'm addressin' a

congregation?"

"I'm not accustomed to this sort of speech, and I'll thank you to modify it," answered Beekman, outraged by the other's brutal rudeness, and quite forgetful of his appearance and condition.

He was a quick-tempered young man, and all his life he had received deference and respect. He did not propose to let anybody talk to him that way.

"Why, you infernal sea lawyer, you back-talkin' slob, you dirty malingerer, what do you think you are; one of the officers on this ship; a passenger?"

"Whatever I am, I'm not under your orders."

"You ain't, ain't ye! I'll learn you what you are. Git aft an' tail on to them halliards, an' be quick about it."

"I'll see you damned first."

"What!" roared Bill Woywod. He balled his enormous fist and struck viciously at Beekman. In a rough-and-tumble fight the latter would have had no chance with the mate, for what the officer lacked in science he made up in brute force. Beekman was in a horrible physical condition from his excesses and the result of the knockout drops which had been administered to him, but his spirit was as strong as ever, and his skill as great. He parried the blow easily with his left, and sent a swift right to Woywod's iron jaw.

The main tops'l halliards had not yet been cast off, and the men surged forward. Captain Peleg Fish, with an amazing agility for one of his years, disdaining the accommodation ladders,

leaped over the rail of the bridge, dropped to the deck, and ran forward, leaving the conning of the ship to the second mate.

"Rank mutiny, by heck," shouted the captain, drawing a revolver. "Stand clear, git back to them halliards, every mother's son of ye, or I'll let daylight through ye. What's the matter here, Mr. Woywod?"

Now, if Beekman had been in good condition, that blow to the jaw might have put Woywod out for a few moments, although that is questionable, but as it was, it had merely staggered him. It lacked steam. But it was hard enough to rouse all the devilry in the mate's heart.

"Do you need any help, sir?" continued Captain Peleg Fish, handling his pistol.

"None. Stand back, men," he answered to the captain, and shouted to the crew in one breath.

Woywod had taken one blow. He took another, for, as he leaped at Beekman, who was not so thoroughly angry that he did not stop to reason, the latter hit him with all his force. Woywod partly parried the blow, and the next moment he had the young man in his arms. He crushed him against his breast; he shook him to and fro. He finally shifted his hands to the other's throat and choked him until he was insensible. Then he threw him in the lee scuppers and turned aft, the crew falling back before him and running to the halliards with almost ludicrous haste.

"What was the trouble?" asked Captain Fish.

"The lazy swab refused to obey my orders to tail on the

halliards with the rest of the men, an' then he struck me."

"Rank mutiny," shouted the captain. "Shall we put him in irons?"

"No, sir. We're not any too full handed as it is. He evidently doesn't know the law of the sea. Perhaps he's not quite himself. It's the first time he's been on deck since we took our departure yesterday mornin'. Leave him to me, sir; I'll turn him into a good, willin', obedient sailorman afore I gits through with him."

"Very good. Bear a hand with the maintops'l," said the captain, turning and walking aft. "It blows harder every minute. I don't want to rip the sticks off her just yet, although I can carry on as long as any master that sails the sea," he added for the benefit of Salver, the second mate.

The sea was rising, and although the *Susquehanna* was a dry ship, yet the wind had nipped the tops of the waves and from time to time the spray came aboard. There was water in the lee scuppers, and this presently brought back consciousness to Beekman. He sat up finally, and, no one paying him any attention, watched the proceedings until the reefs had been taken in the tops'ls and the ship prepared for the growing storm. He watched them with no degree of interest but with black rage and murder in his heart. If he had a weapon, or the strength, he thought he would have killed the mate as the latter came toward him.

With a desire, natural under the circumstances, to be in position for whatever might betide, he rose to his feet and clung

desperately to the pinrail, confronting the mate. The men of the crew had scattered to their various stations and duties. All hands had been called, but the ship having been made snug alow and aloft, the watch below had been dismissed, and some of them were already tripping down the ladder into the forepeak. Beekman was left entirely to his own devices. No one presumed to interfere between the mate and this newest member of the ship's people.

"Well, you," began Woywod with an oath. "Have you had your lesson? Do you know who's who aboard this ship? Are you ready to turn to?"

"I'm ready for nothing," said Beekman hotly, "except to kill you if I get a chance."

"Look here," said Woywod, "you're evidently a green hand. Probably you've never been on a ship afore, an' you don't know the law of the sea. 'T ain't to be expected that you would. We gits many aboard that makes their first v'yage with us. But there's one thing you do know, an' that's that I'm your master." His great hand shot out and shook itself beneath Beekman's face. "An' I'm your master not only because I'm first officer of this ship, but because I'm a better man than you are. I flung you into the lee scuppers an' I can do it again. I'm willin' an' wishful to do it, too. If you gimme any more mutinous back talk; if you refuse to turn to an' do your duty accordin' to the articles you signed when you come aboard, you'll git it again. If you act like a man instead of a fool, you'll have no more trouble with me 's long as you obey

orders. D'ye git that?"

"I get it, yes. It's plain enough, but it makes no difference to me."

"It don't, don't it?"

"No; and I'm not a member of this crew. I signed no articles, and I don't propose to do a thing unless I please. I want to see the captain."

"You gimme the lie, do you?" said Woywod, approaching nearer.

"Now, look here," said Beekman; "I want you to understand one thing."

"What's that?"

"I'm not afraid of you. You can kill me. You've got the physical strength to do it, although if I were not so sick, there might be an argument as to that; so you might as well quit bullying me. Oh, yes, I have no doubt but what you could knock me over again, but I'll die fighting."

His hand clenched a belaying pin. He drew it out and lifted it up.

"Mr. Woywod," the captain's voice came from aft, "is that man givin' you any trouble again?"

"I can deal with him, sir."

"Send him aft to me."

Of course, Woywod could not disobey so direct an order. He had no relish for it, but there was no help for it. Beekman himself took action. He shoved past the mate, who, under the

circumstances, did not dare to hit him, and made his way staggering along the deck to the bridge, where the mate followed him. Two or three of the crew came aft, but the mate drove them forward with curses and oaths.

"Young man," said the captain, an old man of short stature, but immensely broad shouldered and powerful, "do you know what mutiny is?"

"I certainly do."

"Oh, you've been to sea before, have you?"

"Many times."

"On what ships?"

"Trans-Atlantic liners and my own yacht."

"Your own yacht!" The captain burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's what I said."

"Do you know I'm the master of this ship?"

"I presume so."

"Well, then, say 'sir' to me, an' be quick about it."

"It is your due," said Beekman; "I should have done it before. I beg your pardon, sir."

"That's better. Now, what's this cock-an'-bull story you're try in' to tell me? Look here, Smith-"

"That's not my name, sir."

"Well, that's the name you made your mark to on the ship's articles when you were brought aboard, the drunkest sailor I ever seen."

"That's exactly it," said Beekman. "I'm no sailor, and my name

is not Smith."

"What's your name?"

"Beekman; Derrick Beekman."

"How came you aboard my ship?"

"I suppose I've been shanghaied. I don't know any more than you do; perhaps not as much."

"You mean," roared the captain, "that I had any hand in bringing you here?"

"I don't know anything about that. I only know that I was to be married today, Thursday."

"'Tain't Thursday; it's Friday. You've been in a drunken stupor since Thursday morning."

"Friday!"

Beekman looked about him with something like despair in his heart. There was not even a ship to be seen in the whole expanse of leaden sea.

"Captain-What's your name, sir?"

"Well, the impudence of that," ejaculated Woywod.

"What difference does it make to you what the cap'n's name is," sneered Salver.

"It's Peleg Fish, Smith-Beekman, or Beekman-Smith; Captain Peleg Fish."

"Well, Captain Fish, I'm a member of an old New York family and-"

"Families don't count for nothin' here," said the captain. "If that's all you've got to say, I've seen a many of them last scions

brought down to the fok's'l."

"I was engaged to be married to the daughter of John Maynard. I presume you've heard of him."

"Do you mean the president of the Inter-Oceanic Trading Company?"

"I do."

"Well, I've heard of him all right," laughed the captain. "This is the *Susquehanna*. She belongs to his company. We fly his house flag. Do you mean to tell me that you claim to have been engaged to his daughter; a drunken ragamuffin like you, the off-scourin's of Water Street, which the crimps unload on us poor, helpless, seafarin' men as able seamen?"

"I was. I am. The wedding was set for yesterday. We had a bachelor dinner on Wednesday night, and I guess we all drank too much. At any rate, I don't know anything further except that I woke up here."

"It's a likely story."

"That chap's got a rich imagination," sneered the second mate.

"He'd orter be writin' romances," ejaculated Woywod.

"Enough," said Captain Fish. "Your story may be true or it may not. I don't think it is, but whether it is or not, it don't matter. You were brought aboard at two o'clock Thursday morning. We tripped and sailed at four. His name's on the articles, Mr. Woywod?"

"It is; John Smith. I witnessed his signature. He couldn't write at the time, so someone held his hand an' he made his mark."

"This is an outrage," roared Beekman. "What became of my watch and clothes?"

"You had nothin' but what you've got on now when you came aboard. Am I right, cap'n?"

"You are, sir."

"So you see there's nothin' for you to do but turn to an' behave yourself an' obey orders. When the ship reaches Vladivostok, an' we pays off, you can take your discharge an' go where you please."

"I'll give you a thousand dollars to go back to New York and land me."

The captain grinned. Taking their cue from him, Mr. Woywod and Mr. Salver exploded with laughter.

"You might as well make it ten thousand, while you're about it."

"I will make it ten thousand," said Beekman, desperately.

"Nonsense!"

"Well, then, will you trans-ship me to some vessel bound for New York?"

"We're short handed, sir," put in Woywod.

"Couldn't think of it," said the captain, who, of course, disbelieved *in toto* Beekman's highly improbable story.

This was the richest and most extravagant tale he had ever listened to. To do him justice, every voyage he had ever sailed had produced someone who strove to get out of the ship by urging some wildly improbable excuse for his being there.

"Well, sir, if you won't do that, I suppose Colon will be your first port of call, and you are going through the Panama Canal. Let me get on the end of the cable there and I'll get you orders from Mr. Maynard himself."

"I might be inclined to do that," said the captain facetiously, "but the canal is blocked by another slide in the Culebra cut, an' we're goin' around the Horn."

"Don't you touch anywhere?"

"Some South Sea island for vegetables an' water, mebbe, but no place where there's a cable, if I can help it. When I takes my departure I don't want nobody interferin' with me an' sendin' orders after me."

"Is there a wireless on the ship?"

"No. Now, if you've finished your questionin', perhaps you'll allow me to say a word or two."

"An' you may be very thankful to the cap'n for his kind treatment, for I never seed him so agreeable to a man tryin' to sojer out of work an' shirk his job afore," said Woywod.

"Jestice, Mr. Woywod, an' fair treatment, even to the common sailor, is my motto. As long as they obey orders, they've got nothin' to fear from me, an' that goes for you, Smith."

"Beekman," insisted the young man.

"Smith it was, Smith it is, Smith it will be. That's the first order. Now, I'll give you a little advice. Mr. Woywod and Mr. Salver is among the gentlest officers I ever sailed with, so long as they ain't crossed. You turn to an' do what you're told or you'll git

it constantly; fist, rope's end, belay'n pin, sea boots, or whatever comes handiest, an' if you're obstinate enough, an' if it's serious enough, a charge of mutiny, an' double irons. Understand?"

Beekman nodded; the captain's meaning was clear.

"Go for'ard, now, an' remember, mutiny means a term in prison at the end of the voyage, an' mebbe worse. However you come aboard, you're here, an' bein' here, you got to obey orders or take the consequences."

"I protest against this outrage. I'll have the law. I'll bring you to justice."

"Belay that," said the captain, more or less indifferently. "It don't git you nowhere. If you are well advised, you'll heed my suggestions, that's all."

Beekman was absolutely helpless. There was nothing that he could do. Although more angry and more resentful than ever, he fully realized his impotency. He turned to go forward. Bill Woywod stopped him. The passion that the mate saw in Beekman's face, as he fairly gritted his teeth at him, startled him a little. Most liars and malingerers did not take it that way. They accepted the inevitable with more or less grace.

"You're in my watch," said Woywod.

"More's the pity."

"An' it happens to be the watch below. One bell has jest struck; four-thirty. The watch below takes the deck at four bells; six o'clock for the second dogwatch. I'll give you till then to think about it. If you don't turn to then with the rest an' do a man's

duty, by God, you'll suffer for it."

CHAPTER VIII
THE ANVIL MUST TAKE THE POUNDING

Beekman had never thought so hard in his life as he did in the next hour and a half. Try as he would, he could see no way out of the hideous *impasse* into which fate had thrust him. He had not the faintest idea that his situation was caused by the treachery of his friend. No suspicion of betrayal entered his mind. He was certain it was simply the result of accident, and no one was to blame except himself.

He had got beastly drunk after that dinner. He had driven down town with Harnash. They had stopped on the way. They had finally separated. He had been assaulted, robbed, and probably left senseless from drink and the beating he had received. He hoped fervently that he had put up a good fight before being beaten into insensibility. Some crimp had picked him up, stripped him of his clothes, put him into these filthy rags, and sent him aboard the ship. By a legal mockery which would yet suffice, he had signed the articles. There was no way he could convince the captain of the truth of his story. Unless stress of weather or accident drove the ship to make port somewhere, he could communicate with nobody for six months, or until they dropped anchor at Vladivostok. He was a prisoner. Neither by

physical force nor by mental alertness and ability could he alter that fact or change conditions.

Fantastic schemes came into his mind, of course; among them the organization of the crew, a mutiny, the seizure of the ship. But that would not be possible unless conditions on the ship became absolutely unbearable; and even if it were practicable, in all probability he might be leading the whole body to death and disaster. Beekman knew something about the organization and administration of the Inter-Oceanic Trading Company. He knew their ships were always well found and well provisioned. Given a well-found ship and plenty of good food to eat, and a sailor will stand almost anything.

Besides, most of these men knew fully the character of Captain Fish, Mr. Woywod, and Mr. Salver. They were as hard as iron, and as quick as lightning, and as ruthless as the devil himself, but if the men did what they were told, and did it quickly, and did it well, they got off with abuse only, and a comparative freedom from manhandling.

All three officers were fine seamen. They could handle a ship in any wind or sea as a skilled chauffeur handles a well-known car in heavy traffic, and it is a great deal harder to handle a ship than a car, especially a sailing ship. Blow high, blow low, come what would, these men were equal to any demand, and all that could be got out of timber and cordage and canvas, to say nothing of steel wire, these men could get. Also they were drivers. They would carry to'gall'n'ts'l's when other ships dared show no more

than a close-reefed tops'l. Speed was a prime requisite with the owners. The *Susquehanna*, in particular, had to justify her use, and Captain Fish took a natural and pardonable pride in striving for the steamer record. All this pleased the men. Sailors will put up with much from a skillful, energetic, alert, daring, and successful officer. They made quick runs and drew high pay. Many of them had been attached to the *Susquehanna* since she had been commissioned. They had learned so to comport themselves as to avoid as much trouble as possible.

Beekman was in the receipt of not a little rough, but common-sense, advice from the watch below in the forecastle. His own better judgment told him that the unpalatable advice must be followed. Fish, Woywod, and Salver had it in their power to harry him to death. His spirit, nevertheless, rebelled against any such knuckling down as would be required. At three bells in the first dogwatch one of the ship's boys came to him with a message.

"Are you John Smith?" he said, stopping before him.

Beekman took his first lesson then and there. His inclination was, as it had been, to shout his own name to the trucks whenever he was questioned, but what was the use? He bit his lips and nodded.

"That's what they call me."

"Well, Mr. Gersey wants to see you."

"Who is he?"

"He's the ship's Bo's'n."

"Am I at the beck and call of everybody on the ship?"

"Look here, young feller," said an old, down-east sailor named Templin, who, on account of his age and experience, had been made the Bo's'n's mate of the port watch. "You've had a lot of advice throwed into you, which you may or may not foller. This last is worth 'bout as much as all the rest. The Bo's'n ain't no certificated officer. He don't live aft. He's got a position sort o' 'twixt fo'c's'l an' quarter-deck, but there's no man aboard who can do more for you or agin you than him. You seems to be a sort of a friendless damn fool. We don't none of us believe your yarn, but we sympathize with you because we've been in the same sitooation, all of us. Jim Gersey is a square man. You ain't had no chance to run athwart his hawse, an' like enough he wants to do you a good turn. You'd better go, an' go a-runnin'."

"Thank you," answered Beekman, rising and following the boy to the boatswain's cabin, right abaft the forecastle.

"Look here, Smith-" began that grizzled and veteran mariner, who had followed the sea all his life, and looked it.

"Smith is not my name."

"In course, it ain't, but it's the name you'll go by on this ship. I don't know why it is, but every man I ever seed articled on a ship without his consent got named Smith or Jones. I've knowed some mighty respectable people o' them names, an' I don't see why they've got to be saddled with all the offscourin's o' creation, meanin' no offense," said the rough, but somehow kindly, old man. "Smith it is, an'-"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.