

BARR ROBERT

IN A STEAMER CHAIR,
AND OTHER STORIES

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Barr R.

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As the incidents related herein took place during voyages between England and America, I dedicate this book to the Vagabond Club of London, and the Witenagemote Club of Detroit, in the hope that, if any one charges me with telling a previously told tale, the fifty members of each club will rise as one man and testify that they were called upon to endure the story in question from my own lips prior to the alleged original appearance of the same.

R. B.

In a Steamer Chair

The First Day

Mr. George Morris stood with his arms folded on the bulwarks of the steamship *City of Buffalo*, and gazed down into the water. All around him was the bustle and hurry of passengers embarking, with friends bidding good-bye. Among the throng, here and there, the hardworking men of the steamer were getting things in order for the coming voyage. Trunks were piled up in great heaps ready to be lowered into the hold; portmanteaux, satchels, and hand-bags, with tags tied to them, were placed in a row waiting to be claimed by the passengers, or taken down into the state-rooms. To all this bustle and confusion George Morris paid no heed. He was thinking deeply, and his thoughts did not seem to be very pleasant. There was nobody to see him off, and he had evidently very little interest in either those who were going or those who were staying behind. Other passengers who had no friends to bid them farewell appeared to take a lively interest in watching the hurry and scurry, and in picking out the voyagers from those who came merely to say good-bye.

At last the rapid ringing of a bell warned all lingerers that the time for the final parting had come. There were final hand-shakings, many embraces, and not a few tears, while men in uniform with stentorian voices cried, "All ashore." The second clanging of the bell, and the preparations for pulling up the gang-planks hurried the laggards to the pier. After the third ringing the gang-plank was hauled away, the inevitable last man sprang to the wharf, the equally inevitable last passenger, who had just dashed up in a cab, flung his valises to the steward, was helped on board the ship, and then began the low pulsating stroke, like the beating of a heart, that would not cease until the vessel had sighted land on the other side. George Morris's eyes were fixed on the water, yet apparently he was not looking at it, for when it began to spin away from the sides of the ship he took no notice, but still gazed at the mass of seething foam that the steamer threw off from her as she moved through the bay. It was evident that the sights of New York harbour were very familiar to the young man, for he paid no attention to them, and the vessel was beyond Sandy Hook before he changed his position. It is doubtful if he would have changed it then, had not a steward touched him on the elbow, and said—

"Any letters, sir?"

"Any what?" cried Morris, suddenly waking up from his reverie.

"Any letters, sir, to go ashore with the pilot?"

"Oh, letters. No, no, I haven't any. You have a regular post-office on board, have you? Mail leaves every day?"

"No, sir," replied the steward with a smile, "not *every* day, sir. We send letters ashore for passengers when the pilot leaves the ship. The next mail, sir, will leave at Queenstown."

The steward seemed uncertain as to whether the passenger was trying to joke with him or was really ignorant of the ways of steamships. However, his tone was very deferential and explanatory, not knowing but that this particular passenger might come to his lot at the table, and stewards take very good care to offend nobody. Future fees must not be jeopardized.

Being aroused, Mr. Morris now took a look around him. It seemed wonderful how soon order had been restored from the chaos of the starting. The trunks had disappeared down the hold; the portmanteaux were nowhere to be seen. Most of the passengers apparently were in their state-rooms exploring their new quarters, getting out their wraps, Tam-o-Shanters, fore-and-aft caps, steamer chairs, rugs, and copies of paper-covered novels. The deck was almost deserted, yet here and there a steamer chair had already been placed, and one or two were occupied. The voyage had commenced. The engine had settled down to its regular low thud, thud; the vessel's head rose gracefully with the

long swell of the ocean, and, to make everything complete, several passengers already felt that inward qualm—the accompaniment of so many ocean voyages. George Morris yawned, and seemed the very picture of *ennui*. He put his hands deeply into his coat pockets, and sauntered across the deck. Then he took a stroll up the one side and down the other. As he lounged along it was very evident that he was tired of the voyage, even before it began. Judging from his listless manner nothing on earth could arouse the interest of the young man. The gong sounded faintly in the inner depths of the ship somewhere announcing dinner. Then, as the steward appeared up the companion way, the sonorous whang, whang became louder, and the hatless official, with the gong in hand, beat that instrument several final strokes, after which he disappeared into the regions below.

"I may as well go down," said Morris to himself, "and see where they have placed me at table. But I haven't much interest in dinner."

As he walked to the companion-way an elderly gentleman and a young lady appeared at the opposite door, ready to descend the stairs. Neither of them saw the young man. But if they had, one of them at least would have doubted the young man's sanity. He stared at the couple for a moment with a look of grotesque horror on his face that was absolutely comical. Then he turned, and ran the length of the deck, with a speed unconscious of all obstacles.

"Say," he cried to the captain, "I want to go ashore. I *must* go ashore. I want to go ashore with the pilot."

The captain smiled, and said, "I shall be very happy to put you ashore, sir, but it will have to be at Queenstown. The pilot has gone."

"Why, it was only a moment ago that the steward asked me if I had any letters to post. Surely he cannot have gone yet?"

"It is longer than that, I am afraid," said the captain. "The pilot left the ship half an hour ago."

"Is there no way I can get ashore? I don't mind what I pay for it."

"Unless we break a shaft and have to turn back there is no way that I know of. I am afraid you will have to make the best of it until we reach Queenstown."

"Can't you signal a boat and let me get off on her?"

"Well, I suppose we could. It is a very unusual thing to do. But that would delay us for some time, and unless the business is of the utmost necessity, I would not feel justified in delaying the steamer, or in other words delaying several hundred passengers for the convenience of one. If you tell me what the trouble is I shall tell you at once whether I can promise to signal a boat if I get the opportunity of doing so."

Morris thought for a moment. It would sound very absurd to the captain for him to say that there was a passenger on the ship whom he desired very much not to meet, and yet, after all, that was what made the thought of the voyage so distasteful to him.

He merely said, "Thank you," and turned away, muttering to himself something in condemnation of his luck in general. As he walked slowly down the deck up which he had rushed with such headlong speed a few moments before, he noticed a lady trying to set together her steamer chair, which had seemingly given way—a habit of steamer chairs. She looked up appealing at Mr. Morris, but that gentleman was too preoccupied with his own situation to be gallant. As he passed her, the lady said—

"Would you be kind enough to see if you can put my steamer chair together?"

Mr. Morris looked astonished at this very simple request. He had resolved to make this particular voyage without becoming acquainted with anybody, more especially a lady.

"Madam," he said, "I shall be pleased to call to your assistance the deck steward if you wish."

"If I had wished that," replied the lady, with some asperity, "I would have asked you to do so. As it is, I asked you to fix it yourself."

"I do not understand you," said Mr. Morris, with some haughtiness. "I do not see that it matters who mends the steamer chair so long as the steamer chair is mended. I am not a deck steward." Then,

thinking he had spoken rather harshly, he added, "I am not a deck steward, and don't understand the construction of steamer chairs as well as they do, you see."

The lady rose. There was a certain amount of indignation in her voice as she said—

"Then pray allow me to present you with this steamer chair."

"I—I—really, madam, I do not understand you," stammered the young man, astonished at the turn the unsought conversation had taken.

"I think," replied the lady, "that what I said was plain enough. I beg you to accept this steamer chair as your own. It is of no further use to me."

Saying this, the young woman, with some dignity, turned her back upon him, and disappeared down the companion-way, leaving Morris in a state of utter bewilderment as he looked down at the broken steamer chair, wondering if the lady was insane. All at once he noticed a rent in his trousers, between the knee and the instep.

"Good heavens, how have I done this? My best pair of trousers, too. Gracious!" he cried, as a bewildered look stole over his face, "it isn't possible that in racing up this deck I ran against this steamer chair and knocked it to flinders, and possibly upset the lady at the same time? By George! that's just what the trouble is."

Looking at the back of the flimsy chair he noticed a tag tied to it, and on the tag he saw the name, "Miss Katherine Earle, New York." Passing to the other side he called the deck steward.

"Steward," he said, "there is a chair somewhere among your pile with the name 'Geo. Morris' on it. Will you get it for me?"

"Certainly, sir," answered the steward, and very shortly the other steamer chair, which, by the way, was a much more elegant, expensive, and stable affair than the one that belonged to Miss Katherine Earle, was brought to him. Then he untied the tag from his own chair and tied it to the flimsy structure that had just been offered to him; next he untied the tag from the lady's chair and put it on his own.

"Now, steward," he said, "do you know the lady who sat in this chair?"

"No, sir," said the steward, "I do not. You see, we are only a few hours out, sir."

"Very well, you will have no trouble finding her. When she comes on deck again, please tell her that this chair is hers, with the apologies of the gentleman who broke her own, and see if you can mend this other chair for me."

"Oh yes," said the steward, "there will be no trouble about that. They are rather rickety things at best, sir."

"Very well, if you do this for me nicely you will not be a financial sufferer."

"Thank you, sir. The dinner gong rang some time ago, sir."

"Yes, I heard it," answered Morris.

Placing his hands behind him he walked up and down the deck, keeping an anxious eye now and then on the companion way. Finally, the young lady whom he had seen going down with the elderly gentleman appeared alone on deck. Then Morris acted very strangely. With the stealthy demeanour of an Indian avoiding his deadly enemy, he slunk behind the different structures on the deck until he reached the other door of the companion-way, and then, with a sigh of relief, ran down the steps. There were still quite a number of people in the saloon, and seated at the side of one of the smaller tables he noticed the lady whose name he imagined was Miss Katherine Earle.

"My name is Morris," said that gentleman to the head steward. "Where have you placed me?"

The steward took him down the long table, looking at the cards beside the row of plates.

"Here you are, sir," said the steward. "We are rather crowded this voyage, sir."

Morris did not answer him, for opposite he noticed the old gentleman, who had been the companion of the young lady, lingering over his wine.

"Isn't there any other place vacant? At one of the smaller tables, for instance? I don't like to sit at the long table," said Morris, placing his finger and thumb significantly in his waistcoat pocket.

"I think that can be arranged, sir," answered the steward, with a smile.

"Is there a place vacant at the table where that young lady is sitting alone?" said Morris, nodding in the direction.

"Well, sir, all the places are taken there; but the gentleman who has been placed at the head of the table has not come down, sir, and if you like I will change his card for yours at the long table."

"I wish you would."

So with that he took his place at the head of the small table, and had the indignant young lady at his right hand.

"There ought to be a master of ceremonies," began Morris with some hesitation, "to introduce people to each other on board a steamship. As it is, however, people have to get acquainted as best they may. My name is Morris, and, unless I am mistaken, you are Miss Katherine Earle. Am I right?"

"You are right about my name," answered the young lady, "I presume you ought to be about your own."

"Oh, I can prove that," said Morris, with a smile. "I have letters to show, and cards and things like that."

Then he seemed to catch his breath as he remembered there was also a young woman on board who could vouch that his name was George Morris. This took him aback for a moment, and he was silent. Miss Earle made no reply to his offer of identification.

"Miss Earle," he said hesitatingly at last, "I wish you would permit me to apologise to you if I am as culpable as I imagine. *Did* I run against your chair and break it?"

"Do you mean to say," replied the young lady, looking at him steadily, "that you do not *know* whether you did or not?"

"Well, it's a pretty hard thing to ask a person to believe, and yet I assure you that is the fact. I have only the dimmest remembrance of the disaster, as of something I might have done in a dream. To tell you the truth, I did not even suspect I had done so until I noticed I had torn a portion of my clothing by the collision. After you left, it just dawned upon me that I was the one who smashed the chair. I therefore desire to apologise very humbly, and hope you will permit me to do so."

"For what do you intend to apologise, Mr. Morris? For breaking the chair, or refusing to mend it when I asked you?"

"For both. I was really in a good deal of trouble just the moment before I ran against your chair, Miss Earle, and I hope you will excuse me on the ground of temporary insanity. Why, you know, they even let off murderers on that plea, so I hope to be forgiven for being careless in the first place, and boorish in the second."

"You are freely forgiven, Mr. Morris. In fact, now that I think more calmly about the incident, it was really a very trivial affair to get angry over, and I must confess I was angry."

"You were perfectly justified."

"In getting angry, perhaps; but in showing my anger, no—as some one says in a play. Meanwhile, we'll forget all about it," and with that the young lady rose, bidding her new acquaintance good night.

George Morris found he had more appetite for dinner than he expected to have.

Second Day

Mr. George Morris did not sleep well his first night on the *City of Buffalo*. He dreamt that he was being chased around the deck by a couple of young ladies, one a very pronounced blonde, and the other an equally pronounced brunette, and he suffered a great deal because of the uncertainty as to which of the two pursuers he desired the most to avoid. It seemed to him that at last he was cornered, and the fiendish young ladies began literally, as the slang phrase is, to mop the deck with him. He felt himself being slowly pushed back and forward across the deck, and he wondered how long he would last if this treatment were kept up. By and by he found himself lying still in his bunk, and the swish, swish above him of the men scrubbing the deck in the early morning showed him his dream had merged into reality. He remembered then that it was the custom of the smoking-room steward to bring a large silver pot of fragrant coffee early every morning and place it on the table of the smoking-room. Morris also recollected that on former voyages that early morning coffee had always tasted particularly good. It was grateful and comforting, as the advertisement has it. Shortly after, Mr. Morris was on the wet deck, which the men were still scrubbing with the slow, measured swish, swish of the brush he had heard earlier in the morning. No rain was falling, but everything had a rainy look. At first he could see only a short distance from the ship. The clouds appeared to have come down on the water, where they hung, lowering. There was no evidence that such a thing as a sun existed. The waves rolled out of this watery mist with an oily look, and the air was so damp and chilly that it made Morris shiver as he looked out on the dreary prospect. He thrust his hands deep into his coat pockets, which seemed to be an indolent habit of his, and walked along the slippery deck to search for the smoking-room. He was thinking of his curious and troublesome dream, when around the corner came the brunette, wrapped in a long cloak that covered her from head to foot. The cloak had a couple of side pockets set angleways in front, after the manner of the pockets in ulsters. In these pockets Miss Earle's hands were placed, and she walked the deck with a certain independent manner which Mr. Morris remembered that he disliked. She seemed to be about to pass him without recognition, when the young man took off his cap and said pleasantly, "Good morning, Miss Earle. You are a very early riser."

"The habit of years," answered that young lady, "is not broken by merely coming on board ship." Mr. Morris changed step and walked beside her.

"The habit of years?" he said. "Why, you speak as if you were an old woman."

"I *am* an old woman," replied the girl, "in everything but one particular."

"And that particular," said her companion, "is the very important one, I imagine, of years."

"I don't know why that is so very important."

"Oh, you will think so in after life, I assure you. I speak as a veteran myself."

The young lady gave him a quick side glance with her black eyes from under the hood that almost concealed her face.

"You say you are a veteran," she answered, "but you don't think so. It would offend you very deeply to be called old."

"Oh, I don't know about that. I think such a remark is offensive only when there is truth in it. A young fellow slaps his companion on the shoulder and calls him 'old man.' The grey-haired veteran always addresses his elderly friend as 'my boy.'"

"Under which category do you think you come, then?"

"Well, I don't come under either exactly. I am sort of on the middle ground. I sometimes feel very old. In fact, to confess to you, I never felt older in my life than I did yesterday. Today I am a great deal younger."

"Dear me," replied the young lady, "I am sorry to hear that."

"Sorry!" echoed her companion; "I don't see why you should be sorry. It is said that every one rejoices in the misfortunes of others, but it is rather unusual to hear them admit it."

"It is because of my sympathy for others that I am sorry to hear you are younger today than you were yesterday. If you take to running along the deck today then the results will be disastrous and I think you owe it to your fellow passengers to send the steward with his gong ahead of you so as to give people in steamer chairs warning."

"Miss Earle," said the young man, "I thought you had forgiven me for yesterday. I am sure I apologised very humbly, and am willing to apologise again to-day."

"Did I forgive you? I had forgotten?"

"But you remembered the fault. I am afraid that is misplaced forgetfulness. The truth is, I imagine, you are very unforgiving."

"My friends do not think so."

"Then I suppose you rank me among your enemies?"

"You forget that I have known you for a day only."

"That is true, chronologically speaking. But you must remember a day on shipboard is very much longer than a day on shore. In fact, I look on you now as an old acquaintance, and I should be sorry to think you looked on me as an enemy."

"You are mistaken. I do not. I look on you now as you do on your own age—sort of between the two."

"And which way do you think I shall drift? Towards the enemy line, or towards the line of friendship?"

"I am sure I cannot tell."

"Well, Miss Earle, I am going to use my best endeavours to reach the friendship line, which I shall make unless the current is too strong for me. I hope you are not so prejudiced against me that the pleasant effort will be fruitless."

"Oh, I am strictly neutral," said the young lady. "Besides, it really amounts to nothing. Steamer friendships are the most evanescent things on earth."

"Not on earth, surely, Miss Earle. You must mean on sea."

"Well, the earth includes the sea, you know."

"Have you had experience with steamer friendships? I thought, somehow, this was your first voyage."

"What made you think so?"

"Well, I don't know. I thought it was, that's all."

"I hope there is nothing in my manner that would induce a stranger to think I am a verdant traveller."

"Oh, not at all. You know, a person somehow classifies a person's fellow-passengers. Some appear to have been crossing the ocean all their lives, whereas, in fact, they are probably on shipboard for the first time. Have you crossed the ocean before?"

"Yes."

"Now, tell me whether you think I ever crossed before?"

"Why, of course you have. I should say that you cross probably once a year. Maybe oftener."

"Really? For business or pleasure?"

"Oh, business, entirely. You did not look yesterday as if you ever had any pleasure in your life."

"Oh, yesterday! Don't let us talk about yesterday. It's to-day now, you know. You seem to be a mind-reader. Perhaps you could tell my occupation?"

"Certainly. Your occupation is doubtless that of a junior partner in a prosperous New York house. You go over to Europe every year—perhaps twice a year, to look after the interests of your business."

"You think I am a sort of commercial traveller, then?"

"Well, practically, yes. The older members of the firm, I should imagine, are too comfortably situated, and care too little for the pleasures of foreign travel, to devote much of their time to it. So what foreign travel there is to be done falls on the shoulders of the younger partner. Am I correct?"

"Well, I don't quite class myself as a commercial traveller, you know, but in the main you are—in fact, you are remarkably near right. I think you must be something of a mind-reader, as I said before, Miss Earle, or is it possible that I carry my business so plainly in my demeanour as all that?"

Miss Earle laughed. It was a very bright, pleasant, cheerful laugh.

"Still, I must correct you where you are wrong, for fear you become too conceited altogether about your powers of observation. I have not crossed the ocean as often as you seem to think. In the future I shall perhaps do so frequently. I am the junior partner, as you say, but have not been a partner long. In fact I am now on my first voyage in connection with the new partnership. Now, Miss Earle, let me try a guess at your occupation."

"You are quite at liberty to guess at it."

"But will you tell me if I guess correctly?"

"Yes. I have no desire to conceal it."

"Then, I should say off-hand that you are a teacher, and are now taking a vacation in Europe. Am I right?"

"Tell me first why you think so?"

"I am afraid to tell you. I do not want to drift towards the line of enmity."

"You need have no fear. I have every respect for a man who tells the truth when he has to."

"Well, I think a school teacher is very apt to get into a certain dictatorial habit of speech. School teachers are something like military men. They are accustomed to implicit obedience without question, and this, I think, affects their manner with other people."

"You think I am dictatorial, then?"

"Well, I shouldn't say that you were dictatorial exactly. But there is a certain confidence—I don't know just how to express it, but it seems to me, you know—well, I am going deeper and deeper into trouble by what I am saying, so really I shall not say any more. I do not know just how to express it."

"I think you express it very nicely. Go on, please."

"Oh, you are laughing at me now."

"Not at all, I assure you. You were trying to say that I was very dictatorial."

"No, I was trying to say nothing of the kind. I was merely trying to say that you have a certain confidence in yourself and a certain belief that everything you say is perfectly correct, and is not to be questioned. Now, do as you promised, and tell me how near right I am."

"You are entirely wrong. I never taught school."

"Well, Miss Earle, I confessed to my occupation without citing any mitigating circumstances. So now, would you think me impertinent if I asked you to be equally frank?"

"Oh, not at all! But I may say at once that I wouldn't answer you."

"But you will tell me if I guess?"

"Yes, I promise that."

"Well, I am certainly right in saying that you are crossing the ocean for pleasure."

"No, you are entirely wrong. I am crossing for business."

"Then, perhaps you cross very often, too?"

"No; I crossed only once before, and that was coming the other way."

"Really, this is very mysterious. When are you coming back?"

"I am not coming back."

"Oh, well," said Morris, "I give it up. I think I have scored the unusual triumph of managing to be wrong in everything that I have said. Have I not?"

"I think you have."

"And you refuse to put me right?"

"Certainly."

"I don't think you are quite fair, Miss Earle."

"I don't think I ever claimed to be, Mr. Morris. But I am tired of walking now. You see, I have been walking the deck for considerably longer than you have. I think I shall sit down for a while."

"Let me take you to your chair."

Miss Earle smiled. "It would be very little use," she said.

The deck steward was not to be seen, and Morris, diving into a dark and cluttered-up apartment, in which the chairs were piled, speedily picked out his own, brought it to where the young lady was standing, spread it out in its proper position, and said—

"Now let me get you a rug or two."

"You have made a mistake. That is not my chair."

"Oh yes, it is. I looked at the tag. This is your name, is it not?"

"Yes, that is my name; but this is not my chair."

"Well, I beg that you will use it until the owner calls for it."

"But who is the owner? Is this your chair?"

"It was mine until after I smashed up yours."

"Oh, but I cannot accept your chair, Mr. Morris."

"You surely wouldn't refuse to do what you desired, in fact, commanded, another to do. You know you practically ordered me to take your chair. Well, I have accepted it. It is going to be put right to-day. So, you see, you cannot refuse mine."

Miss Earle looked at him for a moment.

"This is hardly what I would call a fair exchange," she said. "My chair was really a very cheap and flimsy one. This chair is much more expensive. You see, I know the price of them. I think you are trying to arrange your revenge, Mr. Morris. I think you want to bring things about so that I shall have to apologise to you in relation to that chair-breaking incident. However, I see that this chair is very comfortable, so I will take it. Wait a moment till I get my rugs."

"No, no," cried Morris, "tell me where you left them. I will get them for you."

"Thank you. I left them on the seat at the head of the companion-way. One is red, the other is more variegated; I cannot describe it, but they are the only two rugs there, I think."

A moment afterwards the young man appeared with the rugs on his arm, and arranged them around the young lady after the manner of deck stewards and gallant young men who are in the habit of crossing the ocean.

"Would you like to have a cup of coffee?"

"I would, if it can be had."

"Well, I will let you into a shipboard secret. Every morning on this vessel the smoking-room steward brings up a pot of very delicious coffee, which he leaves on the table of the smoking-room. He also brings a few biscuits—not the biscuit of American fame, but the biscuit of English manufacture, the cracker, as we call it—and those who frequent the smoking-room are in the habit sometimes of rising early, and, after a walk on deck, pouring out a cup of coffee for themselves."

"But I do not expect to be a *habitué* of the smoking-room," said Miss Earle.

"Nevertheless, you have a friend who will be, and so in that way, you see, you will enjoy the advantages of belonging to the smoking club."

A few moments afterwards, Morris appeared with a camp-stool under his arm, and two cups of coffee in his hands. Miss Earle noticed the smile suddenly fade from his face, and a look of annoyance, even of terror, succeed it. His hands trembled, so that the coffee spilled from the cup into the saucer.

"Excuse my awkwardness," he said huskily; then, handing her the cup, he added, "I shall have to go now. I will see you at breakfast-time. Good morning." With the other cup still in his hand, he made his way to the stair.

Miss Earle looked around and saw, coming up the deck, a very handsome young lady with blonde hair.

Third Day

On the morning of the third day, Mr. George Morris woke up after a sound and dreamless sleep. He woke up feeling very dissatisfied with himself, indeed. He said he was a fool, which was probably true enough, but even the calling himself so did not seem to make matters any better. He reviewed in his mind the events of the day before. He remembered his very pleasant walk and talk with Miss Earle. He knew the talk had been rather purposeless, being merely that sort of preliminary conversation which two people who do not yet know each other indulge in, as a forerunner to future friendship. Then, he thought of his awkward leave-taking of Miss Earle when he presented her with the cup of coffee, and for the first time he remembered with a pang that he had under his arm a camp-stool. It must have been evident to Miss Earle that he had intended to sit down and have a cup of coffee with her, and continue the acquaintance begun so auspiciously that morning. He wondered if she had noticed that his precipitate retreat had taken place the moment there appeared on the deck a very handsome and stylishly dressed young lady. He began to fear that Miss Earle must have thought him suddenly taken with insanity, or, worse still, sea-sickness. The more Morris thought about the matter the more dissatisfied he was with himself and his actions. At breakfast—he had arrived very late, almost as Miss Earle was leaving—he felt he had preserved a glum, reticent demeanour, and that he had the general manner of a fugitive anxious to escape justice. He wondered what Miss Earle must have thought of him after his eager conversation of the morning. The rest of the day he had spent gloomily in the smoking-room, and had not seen the young lady again. The more he thought of the day the worse he felt about it. However, he was philosopher enough to know that all the thinking he could do would not change a single item in the sum of the day's doing. So he slipped back the curtain on its brass rod and looked out into his state-room. The valise which he had left carelessly on the floor the night before was now making an excursion backwards and forwards from the bunk to the sofa, and the books that had been piled up on the sofa were scattered all over the room. It was evident that dressing was going to be an acrobatic performance.

The deck, when he reached it, was wet, but not with the moisture of the scrubbing. The outlook was clear enough, but a strong head-wind was blowing that whistled through the cordage of the vessel, and caused the black smoke of the funnels to float back like huge sombre streamers. The prow of the big ship rose now into the sky and then sank down into the bosom of the sea, and every time it descended a white cloud of spray drenched everything forward and sent a drizzly salt rain along the whole length of the steamer.

"There will be no ladies on deck this morning," said Morris to himself, as he held his cap on with both hands and looked around at the threatening sky. At this moment one wave struck the steamer with more than usual force and raised its crest amidship over the decks. Morris had just time to escape into the companion-way when it fell with a crash on the deck, flooding the promenade, and then rushing out through the scuppers into the sea.

"By George!" said Morris. "I guess there won't be many at breakfast either, if this sort of thing keeps up. I think the other side of the ship is the best."

Coming out on the other side of the deck, he was astonished to see, sitting in her steamer chair, snugly wrapped up in her rugs, Miss Katherine Earle, balancing a cup of steaming coffee in her hand. The steamer chair had been tightly tied to the brass stanchion, or hand-rail, that ran along the side of the housed-in portion of the companion-way, and although the steamer swayed to and fro, as well as up and down, the chair was immovable. An awning had been put up over the place where the chair was fastened, and every now and then on that dripping piece of canvas the salt rain fell, the result of the waves that dashed in on the other side of the steamer.

"Good morning, Mr. Morris!" said the young lady, brightly. "I am very glad you have come. I will let you into a shipboard secret. The steward of the smoking-room brings up every morning a pot of very fragrant coffee. Now, if you will speak to him, I am sure he will be very glad to give you a cup."

"You do like to make fun of me, don't you?" answered the young man.

"Oh, dear no," said Miss Earle, "I shouldn't think of making fun of anything so serious. Is it making fun of a person who looks half frozen to offer him a cup of warm coffee? I think there is more philanthropy than fun about that."

"Well, I don't know but you are right. At any rate, I prefer to take it as philanthropy rather than fun. I shall go and get a cup of coffee for myself, if you will permit me to place a chair beside yours?"

"Oh, I beg you not to go for the coffee yourself. You certainly will never reach here with it. You see the remains of that cup down by the side of the vessel. The steward himself slipped and fell with that piece of crockery in his hands. I am sure he hurt himself, although he said he didn't."

"Did you give him an extra fee on that account?" asked Morris, cynically.

"Of course I did. I am like the Government in that respect. I take care of those who are injured in my service."

"Perhaps, that's why he went down. They are a sly set, those stewards. He knew that a man would simply laugh at him, or perhaps utter some maledictions if he were not feeling in very good humour. In all my ocean voyages I have never had the good fortune to see a steward fall. He knew, also, the rascal, that a lady would sympathise with him, and that he wouldn't lose anything by it, except the cup, which is not his loss."

"Oh yes, it is," replied the young lady, "he tells me they charge all breakages against him."

"He didn't tell you what method they had of keeping track of the breakages, did he? Suppose he told the chief steward that you broke the cup, which is likely he did. What then?"

"Oh, you are too cynical this morning, and it would serve you just right if you go and get some coffee for yourself, and meet with the same disaster that overtook the unfortunate steward. Only you are forewarned that you shall have neither sympathy nor fee."

"Well, in that case," said the young man, "I shall not take the risk. I shall sacrifice the steward rather. Oh, here he is. I say, steward, will you bring me a cup of coffee, please?"

"Yes, sir. Any biscuit, sir?"

"No, no biscuit. Just a cup of coffee and a couple of lumps of sugar, please; and if you can first get me a chair, and strap it to this rod in the manner you do so well, I shall be very much obliged."

"Yes, sir. I shall call the deck steward, sir."

"Now, notice that. You see the rascals never interfere with each other. The deck steward wants a fee, and the smoking-room steward wants a fee, and each one attends strictly to his own business, and doesn't interfere with the possible fees of anybody else."

"Well," said Miss Earle, "is not that the correct way? If things are to be well done, that is how they should be done. Now, just notice how much more artistically the deck steward arranged these rugs than you did yesterday morning. I think it is worth a good fee to be wrapped up so comfortably as that."

"I guess I'll take lessons from the deck steward then, and even if I do not get a fee, I may perhaps get some gratitude at least."

"Gratitude? Why, you should think it a privilege."

"Well, Miss Earle, to tell the truth, I do. It is a privilege that—I hope you will not think I am trying to flatter you when I say—any man might be proud of."

"Oh, dear," replied the young lady, laughing, "I did not mean it in that way at all. I meant that it was a privilege to be allowed to practise on those particular rugs. Now, a man should remember that he undertakes a very great responsibility when he volunteers to place the rugs around a lady on a steamer chair. He may make her look very neat and even pretty by a nice disposal of the rugs, or he may make her look like a horrible bundle."

"Well, then, I think I was not such a failure after all yesterday morning, for you certainly looked very neat and pretty."

"Then, if I did, Mr. Morris, do not flatter yourself it was at all on account of your disposal of the rugs, for the moment you had left a very handsome young lady came along, and, looking at me, said, with such a pleasant smile, 'Why, what a pretty rug you have there; but how the steward *has* bungled it about you! Let me fix it,' and with that she gave it a touch here and a smooth down there, and the result was really so nice that I hated to go down to breakfast. It is a pity you went away so quickly yesterday morning. You might have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the lady, who is, I think, the prettiest girl on board this ship."

"Do you?" said Mr. Morris, shortly.

"Yes, I do. Have you noticed her? She sits over there at the long table near the centre. You must have seen her; she is so very, very pretty, that you cannot help noticing her."

"I am not looking after pretty women this voyage," said Morris, savagely.

"Oh, are you not? Well, I must thank you for that. That is evidently a very sincere compliment. No, I can't call it a compliment, but a sincere remark, I think the first sincere one you have made to-day."

"Why, what do you mean?" said Morris, looking at her in a bewildered sort of way.

"You have been looking after me this morning, have you not, and yesterday morning? And taking ever so much pains to be helpful and entertaining, and now, all at once you say—Well, you know what you said just now."

"Oh yes. Well, you see—"

"Oh, you can't get out of it, Mr. Morris. It was said, and with evident sincerity."

"Then you really think you are pretty?" said Mr. Morris, looking at his companion, who flushed under the remark.

"Ah, now," she said, "you imagine you are carrying the war into the enemy's country. But I don't at all appreciate a remark like that. I don't know but I dislike it even more than I do your compliments, which is saying a good deal."

"I assure you," said Morris, stiffly, "that I have not intended to pay any compliments. I am not a man who pays compliments."

"Not even left-handed ones?"

"Not even any kind, that I know of. I try as a general thing to speak the truth."

"Ah, and shame your hearers?"

"Well, I don't care who I shame as long as I succeed in speaking the truth."

"Very well, then; tell me the truth. Have you noticed this handsome young lady I speak of?"

"Yes, I have seen her."

"Don't you think she is very pretty?"

"Yes, I think she is."

"Don't you think she is the prettiest woman on the ship?"

"Yes, I think she is."

"Are you afraid of pretty women?"

"No, I don't think I am."

"Then, tell me why, the moment she appeared on the deck yesterday morning, you were so much agitated that you spilled most of my coffee in the saucer?"

"Did I appear agitated?" asked Morris, with some hesitation.

"Now, I consider that sort of thing worse than a direct prevarication."

"What sort of thing?"

"Why, a disingenuous answer. You *know* you appeared agitated. You know you *were* agitated. You know you had a camp-stool, and that you intended to sit down here and drink your coffee. All

at once you changed your mind, and that change was coincident with the appearance on deck of the handsome young lady I speak of. I merely ask why?"

"Now, look here, Miss Earle, even the worst malefactor is not expected to incriminate himself. I can refuse to answer, can I not?"

"Certainly you may. You may refuse to answer anything, if you like. It was only because you were boasting about speaking the truth that I thought I should test your truth-telling qualities. I have been expecting every moment that you would say to me I was very impertinent, and that it was no business of mine, which would have been quite true. There, you see, you had a beautiful chance of speaking the truth which you let slip entirely unnoticed. But there is the breakfast gong. Now, I must confess to being very hungry indeed. I think I shall go down into the saloon."

"Please take my arm, Miss Earle," said the young man.

"Oh, not at all," replied that young lady; "I want something infinitely more stable. I shall work my way along this brass rod until I can make a bolt for the door. If you want to make yourself real useful, go and stand on the stairway, or the companion-way I think you call it, and if I come through the door with too great force you'll prevent me from going down the stairs."

"Who ran to help me when I fell," quoted Mr. Morris, as he walked along ahead of her, having some difficulty in maintaining his equilibrium.

"I wouldn't mind the falling," replied the young lady, "if you only would some pretty story tell; but you are very prosaic, Mr. Morris. Do you ever read anything at all?"

"I never read when I have somebody more interesting than a book to talk to."

"Oh, thank you. Now, if you will get into position on the stairway, I shall make my attempts at getting to the door."

"I feel like a base-ball catcher," said Morris, taking up a position somewhat similar to that of the useful man behind the bat.

Miss Earle, however, waited until the ship was on an even keel, then walked to the top of the companion-way, and, deftly catching up the train of her dress with as much composure as if she were in a ballroom, stepped lightly down the stairway. Looking smilingly over her shoulder at the astonished baseball catcher, she said—

"I wish you would not stand in that ridiculous attitude, but come and accompany me to the breakfast table. As I told you, I am very hungry."

The steamer gave a lurch that nearly precipitated Morris down the stairway, and the next moment he was by her side.

"Are you fond of base-ball?" she said to him.

"You should see me in the park when our side makes a home run. Do you like the game?"

"I never saw a game in my life."

"What! you an American girl, and never saw a game of base-ball? Why, I am astonished."

"I did not say that I was an American girl."

"Oh, that's a fact. I took you for one, however."

They were both of them so intent on their conversation in walking up the narrow way between the long table and the short ones, that neither of them noticed the handsome blonde young lady standing beside her chair looking at them. It was only when that young lady said, "Why, Mr. Morris, is this you?" and when that gentleman jumped as if a cannon had been fired beside him, that either of them noticed their fair fellow-traveller.

"Y—es," stammered Morris, "it is!"

The young lady smiled sweetly and held out her hand, which Morris took in an awkward way.

"I was just going to ask you," she said, "when you came aboard. How ridiculous that would have been. Of course, you have been here all the time. Isn't it curious that we have not met each other?—we of all persons in the world."

Morris, who had somewhat recovered his breath, looked steadily at her as she said this, and her eyes, after encountering his gaze for a moment, sank to the floor.

Miss Earle, who had waited for a moment expecting that Morris would introduce her, but seeing that he had for the time being apparently forgotten everything on earth, quietly left them, and took her place at the breakfast table. The blonde young lady looked up again at Mr. Morris, and said—

"I am afraid I am keeping you from breakfast."

"Oh, that doesn't matter."

"I am afraid, then," she continued sweetly, "that I am keeping you from your very interesting table companion."

"Yes, that *does* matter," said Morris, looking at her. "I wish you good morning, madam." And with that he left her and took his place at the head of the small table.

There was a vindictive look in the blonde young lady's pretty eyes as she sank into her own seat at the breakfast table.

Miss Earle had noticed the depressing effect which even the sight of the blonde lady exercised on Morris the day before, and she looked forward, therefore, to rather an uncompanionable breakfast. She was surprised, however, to see that Morris had an air of jaunty joviality, which she could not help thinking was rather forced.

"Now," he said, as he sat down on the sofa at the head of the table, "I think it's about time for us to begin our chutney fight."

"Our what?" asked the young lady, looking up at him with open eyes.

"Is it possible," he said, "that you have crossed the ocean and never engaged in the chutney fight? I always have it on this line."

"I am sorry to appear so ignorant," said Miss Earle, "but I have to confess I do not know what chutney is."

"I am glad of that," returned the young man. "It delights me to find in your nature certain desert spots—certain irreclaimable lands, I might say—of ignorance."

"I do not see why a person should rejoice in the misfortunes of another person," replied the young lady.

"Oh, don't you? Why, it is the most natural thing in the world. There is nothing that we so thoroughly dislike as a person, either lady or gentleman, who is perfect. I suspect you rather have the advantage of me in the reading of books, but I certainly have the advantage of you on chutney, and I intend to make the most of it."

"I am sure I shall be very glad to be enlightened, and to confess my ignorance whenever it is necessary, and that, I fear, will be rather often. So, if our acquaintance continues until the end of the voyage, you will be in a state of perpetual delight."

"Well, that's encouraging. You will be pleased to learn that chutney is a sauce, an Indian sauce, and on this line somehow or other they never have more than one or two bottles. I do not know whether it is very expensive. I presume it is. Perhaps it is because there is very little demand for it, a great number of people not knowing what chutney is."

"Thank you," said the young lady, "I am glad to find that I am in the majority, at least, even in the matter of ignorance."

"Well, as I was saying, chutney is rather a seductive sauce. You may not like it at first, but it grows on you. You acquire, as it were, the chutney habit. An old Indian traveller, whom I had the pleasure of crossing with once, and who sat at the same table with me, demanded chutney. He initiated me into the mysteries of chutney, and he had a chutney fight all the way across."

"I still have to confess that I do not see what there is to fight about in the matter of chutney."

"Don't you? Well, you shall soon have a practical illustration of the terrors of a chutney fight. Steward," called Morris, "just bring me a bottle of chutney, will you?"

"Chutney, air?" asked the steward, as if he had never heard the word before.

"Yes, chutney. Chutney sauce."

"I am afraid, sir," said the steward, "that we haven't any chutney sauce."

"Oh yes, you have. I see a bottle there on the captain's table. I think there is a second bottle at the smaller table. Just two doors up the street. Have the kindness to bring it to me."

The steward left for the chutney, and Morris looking after him, saw that there was some discussion between him and the steward of the other table. Finally, Morris's steward came back and said, "I am very sorry, sir, but they are using the chutney at that table."

"Now look here, steward," said Morris, "you know that you are here to take care of us, and that at the end of the voyage I will take care of you. Don't make any mistake about that. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir, I do," said the steward. "Thank you, sir."

"All right," replied Morris. "Now you understand that I want chutney, and chutney I am going to have."

Steward number one waited until steward number two had disappeared after another order, and then he deftly reached over, took the chutney sauce, and placed it before Mr. Morris.

"Now, Miss Earle, I hope that you will like this chutney sauce. You see there is some difficulty in getting it, and that of itself ought to be a strong recommendation for it."

"It is a little too hot to suit me," answered the young lady, trying the Indian sauce, "still, there is a pleasant flavour about it that I like."

"Oh, you are all right," said Morris, jauntily; "you will be a victim of the chutney habit before two days. People who dislike it at first are its warmest advocates afterwards. I use the word warmest without any allusion to the sauce itself, you know. I shall now try some myself."

As he looked round the table for the large bottle, he saw that it had been whisked away by steward number two, and now stood on the other table. Miss Earle laughed.

"Oh, I shall have it in a moment," said the young man.

"Do you think it is worth while?"

"Worth while? Why, that is the excitement of a chutney fight. It is not that we care for chutney at all, but that we simply are bound to have it. If there were a bottle of chutney at every table, the delights of chutney would be gone. Steward," said Morris, as that functionary appeared, "the chutney, please."

The steward cast a rapid glance at the other table, and waited until steward number two had disappeared. Then Morris had his chutney. Steward number two, seeing his precious bottle gone, tried a second time to stealthily obtain possession of it, but Morris said to him in a pleasant voice, "That's all right, steward, we are through with the chutney. Take it along, please. So that," continued Mr. Morris, as Miss Earle rose from the table, "that is your first experience of a chutney fight—one of the delights of ocean travel."

Fourth Day

Mr. George Morris began to find his "early coffees," as he called them, very delightful. It was charming to meet a pretty and entertaining young lady every morning early when they had the deck practically to themselves. The fourth day was bright and clear, and the sea was reasonably calm. For the first time he was up earlier than Miss Earle, and he paced the deck with great impatience, waiting for her appearance. He wondered who and what she was. He had a dim, hazy idea that some time before in his life, he had met her, and probably had been acquainted with her. What an embarrassing thing it would be, he thought, if he had really known her years before, and had forgotten her, while she knew who he was, and had remembered him. He thought of how accurately she had guessed his position in life—if it was a guess. He remembered that often, when he looked at her, he felt certain he had known her and spoken to her before. He placed the two steamer chairs in position, so that Miss Earle's chair would be ready for her when she did appear, and then, as he walked up and down the deck waiting for her, he began to wonder at himself. If any one had told him when he left New York that, within three or four days he could feel such an interest in a person who previous to that time had been an utter stranger to him, he would have laughed scornfully and bitterly at the idea. As it was, when he thought of all the peculiar circumstances of the case, he laughed aloud, but neither scornfully nor bitterly.

"You must be having very pleasant thoughts, Mr. Morris," said Miss Earle, as she appeared with a bright shawl thrown over her shoulders, instead of the long cloak that had encased her before, and with a Tam o' Shanter set jauntily on her black, curly hair.

"You are right," said Morris, taking off his cap, "I was thinking of you."

"Oh, indeed," replied the young lady, "that's why you laughed, was it? I may say that I do not relish being laughed at in my absence, or in my presence either, for that matter."

"Oh, I assure you I wasn't laughing at you. I laughed with pleasure to see you come on deck. I have been waiting for you."

"Now, Mr. Morris, that from a man who boasts of his truthfulness is a little too much. You did not see me at all until I spoke; and if, as you say, you were thinking of me, you will have to explain that laugh."

"I will explain it before the voyage is over, Miss Earle. I can't explain it just now."

"Ah, then you admit you were untruthful when you said you laughed because you saw me?"

"I may as well admit it. You seem to know things intuitively. I am not nearly as truthful a person as I thought I was until I met you. You seem the very embodiment of truth. If I had not met you, I imagine I should have gone through life thinking myself one of the most truthful men in New York."

"Perhaps that would not be saying very much for yourself," replied the young lady, as she took her place in the steamer chair.

"I am sorry you have such a poor opinion of us New Yorkers," said the young man. "Why are you so late this morning?"

"I am not late; it is you who are early. This is my usual time. I have been a very punctual person all my life."

"There you go again, speaking as if you were ever so old."

"I am."

"Well, I don't believe it. I wish, however, that you had confidence enough in me to tell me something about yourself. Do you know, I was thinking this morning that I had met you before somewhere? I feel almost certain I have."

"Well, that is quite possible, you know. You are a New Yorker, and I have lived in New York for a great number of years, much as you seem to dislike that phrase."

"New York! Oh, that is like saying you have lived in America and I have lived in America. We might live for hundreds of years in New York and never meet one another!"

"That is very true, except that the time is a little long."

"Then won't you tell me something about yourself?"

"No, I will not."

"Why?"

"Why? Well, if you will tell me why you have the right to ask such a question, I shall answer why."

"Oh, if you talk of rights, I suppose I haven't the right. But I am willing to tell you anything about myself. Now, a fair exchange, you know—"

"But I don't wish to know anything about you."

"Oh, thank you."

George Morris's face clouded, and he sat silent for a few moments.

"I presume," he said again, "that you think me very impertinent?"

"Well, frankly, I do."

Morris gazed out at the sea, and Miss Earle opened the book which she had brought with her, and began to read. After a while her companion said—

"I think that you are a little too harsh with me, Miss Earle."

The young lady placed her finger between the leaves of the book and closed it, looking up at him with a frank, calm expression in her dark eyes, but said nothing.

"You see, it's like this. I said to you a little while since that I seem to have known you before. Now, I'll tell you what I was thinking of when you met me this morning. I was thinking what a curious thing it would be if I had been acquainted with you some time during my past life, and had forgotten you, while you had remembered me."

"That was very flattering to me," said the young lady; "I don't wonder you laughed."

"That is why I did not wish to tell you what I had been thinking of—just for fear that you would put a wrong construction on it—as you have done. But now you can't say anything much harsher to me than you have said, and so I tell you frankly just what I thought, and why I asked you those questions which you seem to think are so impertinent. Besides this, you know, a sea acquaintance is different from any other acquaintance. As I said, the first time I spoke to you—or the second—there is no one here to introduce us. On land, when a person is introduced to another person, he does not say, 'Miss Earle, this is Mr. Morris, who is a younger partner in the house of So-and-so.' He merely says, 'Miss Earle, Mr. Morris,' and there it is. If you want to find anything out about him you can ask your introducer or ask your friends, and you can find out. Now, on shipboard it is entirely different. Suppose, for instance, that I did not tell you who I am, and—if you will pardon me for suggesting such an absurd supposition—imagine that you wanted to find out, how could you do it?"

Miss Earle looked at him for a moment, and then she answered—

"I would ask that blonde young lady."

This reply was so utterly unexpected by Morris that he looked at her with wide eyes, the picture of a man dumbfounded. At that moment the smoking-room steward came up to them and said—

"Will you have your coffee now, sir?"

"Coffee!" cried Morris, as if he had never heard the word before. "Coffee!"

"Yes," answered Miss Earle, sweetly, "we will have the coffee now, if you please. You will have a cup with me, will you not, Mr. Morris?"

"Yes, I will, if it is not too much trouble."

"Oh, it is no trouble to me," said, the young lady; "some trouble to the steward, but I believe even for him that it is not a trouble that cannot be recompensed."

Morris sipped his coffee in silence. Every now and then Miss Earle stole a quiet look at him, and apparently was waiting for him to again resume the conversation. This he did not seem in a hurry to do. At last she said—

"Mr. Morris, suppose we were on shipboard and that we had become acquainted without the friendly intervention of an introducer, and suppose, if such a supposition is at all within the bounds of probability, that you wanted to find out something about me, how would you go about it?"

"How would I go about it?"

"Yes. How?"

"I would go about it in what would be the worst possible way. I would frankly ask you, and you would as frankly snub me."

"Suppose, then, while declining to tell you anything about myself I were to refer you to somebody who would give you the information you desire, would you take the opportunity of learning?"

"I would prefer to hear from yourself anything I desired to learn."

"Now, that is very nicely said, Mr. Morris, and you make me feel almost sorry, for having spoken to you as I did. Still, if you really want to find out something about me, I shall tell you some one whom you can ask, and who will doubtless answer you."

"Who is that? The captain?"

"No. It is the same person to whom I should go if I wished to have information of you—the blonde young lady."

"Do you mean to say you know her?" asked the astonished young man.

"I said nothing of the sort."

"Well, *do* you know her?"

"No, I do not."

"Do you know her name?"

"No, I do not even know her name."

"Have you ever met her before you came on board this ship?"

"Yes, I have."

"Well, if that isn't the most astonishing thing I ever heard!"

"I don't see why it is. You say you thought you had met me before. As you are a man no doubt you have forgotten it. I say I think I have met that young lady before. As she is a woman I don't think she will have forgotten. If you have any interest in the matter at all you might inquire."

"I shall do nothing of the sort."

"Well, of course, I said I thought you hadn't very much interest. I only supposed the case."

"It is not that I have not the interest, but it is that I prefer to go to the person who can best answer my question if she chooses to do so. If she doesn't choose to answer me, then I don't choose to learn."

"Now, I like that ever so much," said the young lady; "if you will get me another cup of coffee I shall be exceedingly obliged to you. My excuse is that these cups are very small, and the coffee is very good."

"I am sure you don't need any excuse," replied Morris, springing to his feet, "and I am only too happy to be your steward without the hope of the fee at the end of the voyage."

When he returned she said, "I think we had better stop the personal conversation into which we have drifted. It isn't at all pleasant to me, and I don't think it is very agreeable to you. Now, I intended this morning to give you a lesson on American literature. I feel that you need enlightening on the subject, and that you have neglected your opportunities, as most New York men do, and so I thought you would be glad of a lesson or two."

"I shall be very glad of it indeed. I don't know what our opportunities are, but if most New York men are like me I imagine a great many of them are in the same fix. We have very little time for the study of the literature of any country."

"And perhaps very little inclination."

"Well, you know, Miss Earle, there is some excuse for a busy man. Don't you think there is?"

"I don't think there is very much. Who in America is a busier man than Mr. Gladstone? Yet he reads nearly everything, and is familiar with almost any subject you can mention."

"Oh, Gladstone! Well, he is a man of a million. But you take the average New York man. He is worried in business, and kept on the keen jump all the year round. Then he has a vacation, say for a couple of weeks or a month, in summer, and he goes off into the woods with his fishing kit, or canoeing outfit, or his amateur photographic set, or whatever the tools of his particular fad may be. He goes to a book-store and buys up a lot of paper-covered novels. There is no use of buying an expensive book, because he would spoil it before he gets back, and he would be sure to leave it in some shanty. So he takes those paper-covered abominations, and you will find torn copies of them scattered all through the Adirondacks, and down the St. Lawrence, and everywhere else that tourists congregate. I always tell the book-store man to give me the worst lot of trash he has got, and he does. Now, what is that book you have with you?"

"This is one of Mr. Howells' novels. You will admit, at least, that you have heard of Howells, I suppose?"

"Heard of him? Oh yes; I have read some of Howells' books. I am not as ignorant as you seem to think."

"What have you read of Mr. Howells'?"

"Well, I read *The American*, I don't remember the others."

"*The American!* That is by Henry James."

"Is it? Well, I knew that it was by either Howells or James, I forgot which. They didn't write a book together, did they?"

"Well, not that I know of. Why, the depth of your ignorance about American literature is something appalling. You talk of it so jauntily that you evidently have no idea of it yourself."

"I wish you would take me in hand, Miss Earle. Isn't there any sort of condensed version that a person could get hold of? Couldn't you give me a synopsis of what is written, so that I might post myself up in literature without going to the trouble of reading the books?"

"The trouble! Oh, if that is the way you speak, then your case is hopeless! I suspected it for some time, but now I am certain. The trouble! The *delight* of reading a new novel by Howells is something that you evidently have not the remotest idea of. Why, I don't know what I would give to have with me a novel of Howells' that I had not read."

"Goodness gracious! You don't mean to say that you have read *everything* he has written?"

"Certainly I have, and I am reading one now that is coming out in the magazine; and I don't know what I shall do if I am not able to get the magazine when I go to Europe."

"Oh, you can get them over there right enough, and cheaper than you can in America. They publish them over there."

"Do they? Well, I am glad to hear it."

"You see, there is something about American literature that you are not acquainted with, the publication of our magazines in England, for instance. Ah, there is the breakfast gong. Well, we will have to postpone our lesson in literature until afterwards. Will you be up here after breakfast?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, we will leave our chairs and rugs just where they are. I will take your book down for you. Books have the habit of disappearing if they are left around on shipboard."

After breakfast Mr. Morris went to the smoking-room to enjoy his cigar, and there was challenged to a game of cards. He played one game; but his mind was evidently not on his amusement, so he excused himself from any further dissipation in that line, and walked out on deck. The promise of the morning had been more than fulfilled in the day, and the warm sunlight and mild air had brought on deck many who had not been visible up to that time. There was a long row of muffled up

figures on steamer chairs, and the deck steward was kept busy hurrying here and there attending to the wants of the passengers. Nearly every one had a book, but many of the books were turned face downwards on the steamer rugs, while the owners either talked to those next them, or gazed idly out at the blue ocean. In the long and narrow open space between the chairs and the bulwarks of the ship, the energetic pedestrians were walking up and down.

At this stage of the voyage most of the passengers had found congenial companions, and nearly everybody was acquainted with everybody else. Morris walked along in front of the reclining passengers, scanning each one eagerly to find the person he wanted, but she was not there. Remembering then that the chairs had been on the other side of the ship, he continued his walk around the wheel-house, and there he saw Miss Earle, and sitting beside her was the blonde young lady talking vivaciously, while Miss Earle listened.

Morris hesitated for a moment, but before he could turn back the young lady sprang to her feet, and said—"Oh, Mr. Morris, am I sitting in your chair?"

"What makes you think it is my chair?" asked that gentleman, not in the most genial tone of voice.

"I thought so," replied the young lady, with a laugh, "because it was near Miss Earle."

Miss Earle did not look at all pleased at this remark. She coloured slightly, and, taking the open book from her lap, began to read.

"You are quite welcome to the chair," replied Morris, and the moment the words were spoken he felt that somehow it was one of those things he would rather have left unsaid, as far as Miss Earle was concerned. "I beg that you will not disturb yourself," he continued; and, raising his hat to the lady, he continued his walk.

A chance acquaintance joined him, changing his step to suit that of Morris, and talked with him on the prospects of the next year being a good business season in the United States. Morris answered rather absent-mindedly, and it was nearly lunch-time before he had an opportunity of going back to see whether or not Miss Earle's companion had left. When he reached the spot where they had been sitting he found things the very reverse of what he had hoped. Miss Earle's chair was vacant, but her companion sat there, idly turning over the leaves of the book that Miss Earle had been reading. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Morris?" said the young woman, looking up at him with a winning smile. "Miss Earle has gone to dress for lunch. I should do the same thing, but, alas! I am too indolent."

Morris hesitated for a moment, and then sat down beside her.

"Why do you act so perfectly horrid to me?" asked the young lady, closing the book sharply.

"I was not aware that I acted horridly to anybody," answered Morris.

"You know well enough that you have been trying your very best to avoid me."

"I think you are mistaken. I seldom try to avoid any one, and I see no reason why I should try to avoid you. Do you know of any reason?"

The young lady blushed and looked down at her book, whose leaves she again began to turn.

"I thought," she said at last, "that you might have some feeling against me, and I have no doubt you judge me very harshly. You never *did* make any allowances."

Morris gave a little laugh that was half a sneer.

"Allowances?" he said.

"Yes, allowances. You know you always were harsh with me, George, always." And as she looked up at him her blue eyes were filled with tears, and there was a quiver at the corner of her mouth. "What a splendid actress you would make, Blanche," said the young man, calling her by her name for the first time.

She gave him a quick look as he did so. "Actress!" she cried. "No one was ever less an actress than I am, and you know that."

"Oh, well, what's the use of us talking? It's all right. We made a little mistake, that's all, and people often make mistakes in this life, don't they, Blanche?"

"Yes," sobbed that young lady, putting her dainty silk handkerchief to her eyes.

"Now, for goodness sake," said the young man, "don't do that. People will think I am scolding you, and certainly there is no one in this world who has less right to scold you than I have."

"I thought," murmured the young lady, from behind her handkerchief, "that we might at least be friends. I didn't think you could ever act so harshly towards me as you have done for the past few days."

"Act?" cried the young man. "Bless me, I haven't acted one way or the other. I simply haven't had the pleasure of meeting you till the other evening, or morning, which ever it was. I have said nothing, and done nothing. I don't see how I could be accused of acting, or of anything else."

"I think," sobbed the young lady, "that you might at least have spoken kindly to me."

"Good gracious!" cried Morris, starting up, "here comes Miss Earle. For heaven's sake put up that handkerchief."

But Blanche merely sank her face lower in it, while silent sobs shook her somewhat slender form.

Miss Earle stood for a moment amazed as she looked at Morris's flushed face, and at the bowed head of the young lady beside him; then, without a word, she turned and walked away.

"I wish to goodness," said Morris, harshly, "that if you are going to have a fit of crying you would not have it on deck, and where people can see you."

The young woman at once straightened up and flashed a look at him in which there were no traces of her former emotion.

"People!" she said, scornfully. "Much *you* care about people. It is because Miss Katherine Earle saw me that you are annoyed. You are afraid that it will interfere with your flirtation with her."

"Flirtation?"

"Yes, flirtation. Surely it can't be anything more serious?"

"Why should it not be something more serious?" asked Morris, very coldly. The blue eyes opened wide in apparent astonishment.

"Would you *marry* her?" she said, with telling emphasis upon the word.

"Why not?" he answered. "Any man might be proud to marry a lady like Miss Earle."

"A lady! Much of a lady she is! Why, she is one of your own shop-girls. You know it."

"Shop-girls?" cried Morris, in astonishment.

"Yes, shop-girls. You don't mean to say that she has concealed that fact from you, or that you didn't know it by seeing her in the store?"

"A shop-girl in my store?" he murmured, bewildered. "I knew I had seen her somewhere."

Blanche laughed a little irritating laugh.

"What a splendid item it would make for the society papers," she said. "The junior partner marries one of his own shop-girls, or, worse still, the junior partner and one of his shop-girls leave New York on the *City of Buffalo*, and are married in England. I hope that the reporters will not get the particulars of the affair." Then, rising, she left the amazed young man to his thoughts.

George Morris saw nothing more of Miss Katherine Earle that day.

"I wonder what that vixen has said to her," he thought, as he turned in for the night.

Fifth Day

In the early morning of the fifth day out, George Morris paced the deck alone.

"Shop-girl or not," he had said to himself, "Miss Katherine Earle is much more of a lady than the other ever was." But as he paced the deck, and as Miss Earle did not appear, he began to wonder more and more what had been said to her in the long talk of yesterday forenoon. Meanwhile Miss Earle sat in her own state-room thinking over the same subject. Blanche had sweetly asked her for permission to sit down beside her.

"I know no ladies on board," she said, "and I think I have met you before."

"Yes," answered Miss Earle, "I think we have met before."

"How good of you to have remembered me," said Blanche, kindly.

"I think," replied Miss Earle, "that it is more remarkable that you should remember me than that I should remember you. Ladies very rarely notice the shop-girls who wait upon them."

"You seemed so superior to your station," said Blanche, "that I could not help remembering you, and could not help thinking what a pity it was you had to be there."

"I do not think that there is anything either superior or inferior about the station. It is quite as honourable, or dishonourable, which ever it may be, as any other branch of business. I cannot see, for instance, why my station, selling ribbons at retail, should be any more dishonourable than the station of the head of the firm, who merely does on a very large scale what I was trying to do for him on a very limited scale."

"Still," said Blanche, with a yawn, "people do not all look upon it in exactly that light."

"Hardly any two persons look on any one thing in the same light. I hope you have enjoyed your voyage so far?"

"I have not enjoyed it very much," replied the young lady with a sigh.

"I am sorry to hear that. I presume your father has been ill most of the way?"

"My father?" cried the other, looking at her questioner.

"Yes, I did not see him at the table since the first day."

"Oh, he has had to keep his room almost since we left. He is a very poor sailor."

"Then that must make your voyage rather unpleasant?"

The blonde young lady made no reply, but, taking up the book which Miss Earle was reading, said, "You don't find Mr. Morris much of a reader, I presume? He used not to be."

"I know very little about Mr. Morris," said Miss Earle, freezingly.

"Why, you knew him before you came on board, did you not?" questioned the other, raising her eyebrows.

"No, I did not."

"You certainly know he is junior partner in the establishment where you work?"

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