

BARR ROBERT

A ROCK IN THE
BALTIC

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CHAPTER I —THE INCIDENT AT THE BANK

IN the public room of the Sixth National Bank at Bar Harbor in Maine, Lieutenant Alan Drummond, H.M.S. “Consternation,” stood aside to give precedence to a lady. The Lieutenant had visited the bank for the purpose of changing several crisp white Bank of England notes into the currency of the country he was then visiting. The lady did not appear to notice either his courtesy or his presence, and this was the more remarkable since Drummond was a young man sufficiently conspicuous even in a crowd, and he and she were, at that moment, the only customers in the bank. He was tall, well-knit and stalwart, blond as a Scandinavian, with dark blue eyes which he sometimes said jocularly were the colors of his university. He had been slowly approaching the cashier’s window with the easy movement of a man never in a hurry, when the girl appeared at the door, and advanced rapidly to the bank counter with its brass wire screen surrounding the arched aperture behind which stood the cashier. Although very plainly attired, her gown nevertheless possessed a charm of simplicity that almost suggested complex Paris, and she wore it with that air of distinction the secret of which is supposed to be the exclusive property of French and American women.

The young man saw nothing of this, and although he appreciated the beauty of the girl, what struck him at that instant was the expression of anxiety on her face, whose apparently temporary pallor was accentuated by an abundance of dark hair. It seemed to him that she had resolutely set herself a task which she was most reluctant to perform. From the moment she entered the door her large, dark eyes were fixed almost appealingly on the cashier, and they beheld nothing else. Drummond, mentally slow as he usually was, came to the quick conclusion that this was a supreme moment in her life, on which perhaps great issues depended. He saw her left hand grasp the corner of the ledge in front of the cashier with a grip of nervous tension, as if the support thus attained was necessary to her. Her right hand trembled slightly as she passed an oblong slip of paper through the aperture to the calm and indifferent official.

“Will you give me the money for this check?” she asked in a low voice.

The cashier scrutinized the document for some time in silence. The signature appeared unfamiliar to him.

“One moment, madam,” he said quietly, and retired to a desk in the back part of the bank, where he opened a huge book, turned over some leaves rapidly, and ran his finger down a page. His dilatory action seemed to increase the young woman’s panic. Her pallor increased, and she swayed slightly, as if in danger of falling, but brought her right hand to the assistance of the left, and so steadied herself against the ledge of the cashier’s counter.

“By Jove!” said the Lieutenant to himself, “there’s something wrong here. I wonder what it is. Such a pretty girl, too!”

The cashier behind his screen saw nothing of this play of the emotions. He returned nonchalantly to his station, and asked, in commonplace tones:

“How will you have the money, madam?”

“Gold, if you please,” she replied almost in a whisper, a rosy flush chasing the whiteness from her face, while a deep sigh marked the passing of a crisis.

At this juncture an extraordinary thing happened. The cashier counted out some golden coins, and passed them through the aperture toward their new owner.

“Thank you,” said the girl. Then, without touching the money, she turned like one hypnotized, her unseeing eyes still taking no heed of the big Lieutenant, and passed rapidly out of the bank, The

cashier paid no regard to this abandonment of treasure. He was writing some hieroglyphics on the cashed check.

“By Jove!” gasped the Lieutenant aloud, springing forward as he spoke, sweeping the coins into his hand, and bolting for the door. This was an action which would have awakened the most negligent cashier had he been in a trance. Automatically he whisked out a revolver which lay in an open drawer under his hand.

“Stop, you scoundrel, or I fire!” he shouted, but the Lieutenant had already disappeared. Quick as thought the cashier darted into the passage, and without waiting to unfasten the low door which separated the public and private rooms of the bank, leaped over it, and, bareheaded, gave chase. A British naval officer in uniform, rapidly overtaking a young woman, quite unconscious of his approach, followed by an excited, bareheaded man with a revolver in his grasp, was a sight which would quickly have collected a crowd almost anywhere, but it happened to be the lunch hour, and the inhabitants of that famous summer resort were in-doors; thus, fortunately, the street was deserted. The naval officer was there because the hour of the midday meal on board the cruiser did not coincide with lunch time on shore. The girl was there because it happened to be the only portion of the day when she could withdraw unobserved from the house in which she lived, during banking hours, to try her little agitating financial experiment. The cashier was there because the bank had no lunch hour, and because he had just witnessed the most suspicious circumstance that his constantly alert eye had ever beheld. Calm and imperturbable as a bank cashier may appear to the outside public, he is a man under constant strain during business hours. Each person with whom he is unacquainted that confronts him at his post is a possible robber who at any moment may attempt, either by violence or chicanery, to filch the treasure he guards. The happening of any event outside the usual routine at once arouses a cashier’s distrust, and this sudden flight of a stranger with money which did not belong to him quite justified the perturbation of the cashier. From that point onward, innocence of conduct or explanation so explicit as to satisfy any ordinary man, becomes evidence of more subtle guilt to the mind of a bank official. The ordinary citizen, seeing the Lieutenant finally overtake and accost the hurrying girl, raise his cap, then pour into her outstretched hand the gold he had taken, would have known at once that here was an every-day exercise of natural politeness. Not so the cashier. The farther he got from the bank, the more poignantly did he realize that these two in front, both strangers to him, had, by their combined action, lured him, pistol and all, away from his post during the dullest hour of the day. It was not the decamping with those few pieces of gold which now troubled him: it was fear of what might be going on behind him. He was positive that these two had acted in conjunction. The uniform worn by the man did not impose upon him. Any thief could easily come by a uniform, and, as his mind glanced rapidly backwards over the various points of the scheme, he saw how effectual the plan was: first, the incredible remissness of the woman in leaving her gold on the counter; second, the impetuous disappearance of the man with the money; and, third, his own heedless plunge into the street after them. He saw the whole plot in a flash: he had literally leaped into the trap, and during his five or ten minutes’ absence, the accomplices of the pair might have overawed the unarmed clerks, and walked off with the treasure. His cash drawer was unlocked, and even the big safe stood wide open. Surprise had as effectually lured him away as if he had been a country bumpkin. Bitterly and breathlessly did he curse his own precipitancy. His duty was to guard the bank, yet it had not been the bank that was robbed, but, at best a careless woman who had failed to pick up her money. He held the check for it, and the loss, if any, was hers, not the bank’s, yet here he was, running bareheaded down the street like a fool, and now those two stood quite calmly together, he handing her the money, and thus spreading a mantle of innocence over the vile trick. But whatever was happening in the bank, he would secure two of the culprits at least. The two, quite oblivious of the danger that threatened them, were somewhat startled by a panting man, trembling with rage, bareheaded, and flourishing a deadly weapon, sweeping down upon them.

“Come back to the bank instantly, you two!” he shouted.

“Why?” asked the Lieutenant in a quiet voice.

“Because I say so, for one thing.”

“That reason is unanswerable,” replied the Lieutenant with a slight laugh, which further exasperated his opponent. “I think you are exciting yourself unnecessarily. May I beg you to put that pistol in your pocket? On the cruiser we always cover up the guns when ladies honor us with their presence. You wish me to return because I had no authority for taking the money? Right: come along.”

The cashier regarded this as bluff, and an attempt to give the woman opportunity to escape.

“You must come back also,” he said to the girl.

“I’d rather not,” she pleaded in a low voice, and it was hardly possible to have made a more injudicious remark if she had taken the whole afternoon to prepare.

Renewed determination shone from the face of the cashier.

“You must come back to the bank,” he reiterated.

“Oh, I say,” protested the Lieutenant, “you are now exceeding your authority. I alone am the culprit. The young lady is quite blameless, and you have no right to detain her for a moment.”

The girl, who had been edging away and showing signs of flight, which the bareheaded man, visibly on the alert, leaned forward ready to intercept, seemed to make up her mind to bow to the inevitable. Ignoring the cashier, she looked up at the blond Lieutenant with a slight smile on her pretty lips.

“It was really all my fault at the beginning,” she said, “and very stupid of me. I am slightly acquainted with the bank manager, and I am sure he will vouch for me, if he is there.”

With that she turned and walked briskly toward the bank, at so rapid a pace as to indicate that she did not wish an escort. The bareheaded official found his anger unaccountably deserting him, while a great fear that he had put his foot in it took its place.

“Really,” said the Lieutenant gently, as they strode along together, “an official in your position should be a good judge of human nature. How any sane person, especially a young man, can look at that beautiful girl and suspect her of evil, passes my comprehension. Do you know her?”

“No,” said the cashier shortly. “Do you?”

The Lieutenant laughed genially.

“Still suspicious, eh?” he asked. “No, I don’t know her, but to use a banking term, you may bet your bottom dollar I’m going to. Indeed, I am rather grateful to you for your stubbornness in forcing us to return. It’s a quality I like, and you possess it in marvelous development, so I intend to stand by you when the managerial censure is due. I’m very certain I met your manager at the dinner they gave us last night. Mr. Morton, isn’t he?”

“Yes,” growled the cashier, in gruff despondency.

“Ah, that’s awfully jolly. One of the finest fellows I’ve met in ten years. Now, the lady said she was acquainted with him, so if I don’t wheedle an introduction out of him, it will show that a man at a dinner and a man in a bank are two different individuals. You were looking for plots; so there is mine laid bare to you. It’s an introduction, not gold, I’m conspiring for.”

The cashier had nothing further to say. When they entered the bank together he saw the clerks all busily at work, and knew that no startling event had happened during his absence. The girl had gone direct to the manager’s room, and thither the young men followed her. The bank manager was standing at his desk, trying to preserve a severe financial cast of countenance, which the twinkle in his eyes belied. The girl, also standing, had evidently been giving him a rapid sketch of what had occurred, but now fell into silence when accuser and accomplice appeared.

The advent of the Englishman was a godsend to the manager. He was too courteous a gentleman to laugh in the face of a lady who very seriously was relating a set of incidents which appealed to his sense of humor, so the coming of the Lieutenant enabled him to switch off his mirth on another subject, and in reply to the officer’s cordial “Good-morning, Mr. Morton,” he replied:

“Why, Lieutenant, I’m delighted to see you. That was a very jolly song you sang for us last night: I’ll never forget it. What do you call it? Whittington Fair?” And he laughed outright, as at a genial recollection.

The Lieutenant blushed red as a girl, and stammered:

“Really, Mr. Morton, you know, that’s not according to the rules of evidence. When a fellow comes up for trial, previous convictions are never allowed to be mentioned till after the sentence. Whiddicomb Fair should not be held against me in the present crisis.”

The manager chuckled gleefully. The cashier, when he saw how the land lay, had quietly withdrawn, closing the door behind him.

“Well, Lieutenant, I think I must have this incident cabled to Europe,” said Morton, “so the effete nations of your continent may know that a plain bank cashier isn’t afraid to tackle the British navy. Indeed, Mr. Drummond, if you read history, you will learn that this is a dangerous coast for your warships. It seems rather inhospitable that a guest of our town cannot pick all the gold he wants out of a bank, but a cashier has necessarily somewhat narrow views on the subject. I was just about to apologize to Miss Amhurst, who is a valued client of ours, when you came in, and I hope, Miss Amhurst”—he continued gravely, turning to the girl—“that you will excuse us for the inconvenience to which you have been put.”

“Oh, it does not matter in the least,” replied the young woman, with nevertheless a sigh of relief. “It was all my own fault in so carelessly leaving the money. Some time, when less in a hurry than I am at the present moment, I will tell you how I came to make the blunder.”

Meanwhile the manager caught and interpreted correctly an imploring look from the Lieutenant.

“Before you go, Miss Amhurst, will you permit me to introduce to you my friend, Lieutenant Drummond, of H.M.S. ‘Consternation.’”

This ritual to convention being performed, the expression on the girl’s face showed the renewal of her anxiety to be gone, and as she turned to the door, the officer sprang forward and opened it for her. If the manager expected the young man to return, he was disappointed, for Drummond threw over his shoulder the hasty remark:

“I will see you at the Club this evening,” whereupon the genial Morton, finding himself deserted, sat down in his swivel chair and laughed quietly to himself.

There was the slightest possible shade of annoyance on the girl’s face as the sailor walked beside her from the door of the manager’s room, through the public portion of the bank to the exit, and the young man noticing this, became momentarily tongue-tied, but nevertheless persisted, with a certain awkward doggedness which was not going to allow so slight a hint that his further attendance was unnecessary, to baffle him. He did not speak until they had passed down the stone steps to the pavement, and then his utterance began with a half-embarrassed stammer, as if the shadow of displeasure demanded justification on his part.

“You—you see, Miss Amhurst, we have been properly introduced.”

For the first time he heard the girl laugh, just a little, and the sound was very musical to him.

“The introduction was of the slightest,” she said. “I cannot claim even an acquaintance with Mr. Morton, although I did so in the presence of his persistent subordinate. I have met the manager of the bank but once before, and that for a few moments only, when he showed me where to sign my name in a big book.”

“Nevertheless,” urged Drummond, “I shall defend the validity of that introduction against all comers. The head of a bank is a most important man in every country, and his commendation is really very much sought after.”

“You appear to possess it. He complimented your singing, you know,” and there was a roguish twinkle in the girl’s eye as she glanced up sideways at him, while a smile came to her lips as she saw the color again mount to his cheeks. She had never before met a man who blushed, and she could

not help regarding him rather as a big boy than a person to be taken seriously. His stammer became more pronounced.

“I—I think you are laughing at me, Miss Amhurst, and indeed I don’t wonder at it, and I—I am afraid you consider me even more persistent than the cashier. But I did want to tell you how sorry I am to have caused you annoyance.”

“Oh, you have not done so,” replied the girl quickly. “As I said before, it was all my own fault in the beginning.”

“No, I shouldn’t have taken the gold. I should have come up with you, and told you that it still awaited you in the bank, and now I beg your permission to walk down the street with you, because if any one were looking at us from these windows, and saw us pursued by a bareheaded man with a revolver, they will now, on looking out again, learn that it is all right, and may even come to regard the revolver and the hatless one as an optical delusion.”

Again the girl laughed.

“I am quite unknown in Bar Harbor, having fewer acquaintances than even a stranger like yourself, therefore so far as I am concerned it does not in the least matter whether any one saw us or not. We shall walk together, then, as far as the spot where the cashier overtook us, and this will give me an opportunity of explaining, if not of excusing, my leaving the money on the counter. I am sure my conduct must have appeared inexplicable both to you and the cashier, although, of course, you would be too polite to say so.”

“I assure you, Miss Amhurst—”

“I know what you would say,” she interrupted, with a vivacity which had not heretofore characterized her, “but, you see, the distance to the corner is short, and, as I am in a hurry, if you don’t wish my story to be continued in our next—”

“Ah, if there is to be a next—” murmured the young man so fervently that it was now the turn of color to redden her cheeks.

“I am talking heedlessly,” she said quickly. “What I want to say is this: I have never had much money. Quite recently I inherited what had been accumulated by a relative whom I never knew. It seemed so incredible, so strange—well, it seems incredible and strange yet—and I have been expecting to wake and find it all a dream. Indeed, when you overtook me at this spot where we now stand, I feared you had come to tell me it was a mistake; to hurl me from the clouds to the hard earth again.”

“But it was just the reverse of that,” he cried eagerly. “Just the reverse, remember. I came to confirm your dream, and you received from my hand the first of your fortune.”

“Yes,” she admitted, her eyes fixed on the sidewalk.

“I see how it was,” he continued enthusiastically. “I suppose you had never drawn a check before.”

“Never,” she conceded.

“And this was merely a test. You set up your dream against the hard common sense of a bank, which has no dreams. You were to transform your vision into the actual, or find it vanish. When the commonplace cashier passed forth the coin, their jingle said to you, ‘The supposed phantasy is real,’ but the gold pieces themselves at that supreme moment meant no more to you than so many worthless counters, so you turned your back upon them.”

She looked up at him, her eyes, though moist, illumined with pleasure inspired by the sympathy in his tones rather than the import of his words. The girl’s life heretofore had been as scant of kindness as of cash, and there was a deep sincerity in his voice which was as refreshing to her lonesome heart as it was new to her experience. This man was not so stupid as he had pretended to be. He had accurately divined the inner meaning of what had happened. She had forgotten the necessity for haste which had been so importunate a few minutes before.

“You must be a mind-reader,” she said.

“No, I am not at all a clever person,” he laughed. “Indeed, as I told you, I am always blundering into trouble, and making things uncomfortable for my friends. I regret to say I am rather under a cloud just now in the service, and I have been called upon to endure the frown of my superiors.”

“Why, what has happened?” she asked. After their temporary halt at the corner where they had been overtaken, they now strolled along together like old friends, her prohibition out of mind.

“Well, you see, I was temporarily in command of the cruiser coming down the Baltic, and passing an island rock a few miles away, I thought it would be a good opportunity to test a new gun that had been put aboard when we left England. The sea was very calm, and the rock most tempting. Of course I knew it was Russian territory, but who could have imagined that such a point in space was inhabited by anything else than sea-gulls.”

“What!” cried the girl, looking up at him with new interest. “You don’t mean to say you are the officer that Russia demanded from England, and England refused to give up?”

“Oh, England could not give me up, of course, but she apologized, and assured Russia she had no evil intent. Still, anything that sets the diplomatists at work is frowned upon, and the man who does an act which his government is forced to disclaim becomes unpopular with his superiors.”

“I read about it in the papers at the time. Didn’t the rock fire back at you?”

“Yes, it did, and no one could have been more surprised than I when I saw the answering puff of smoke.”

“How came a cannon to be there?”

“Nobody knows. I suppose that rock in the Baltic is a concealed fort, with galleries and gun-rooms cut in the stone after the fashion of our defences at Gibraltar. I told the court-martial that I had added a valuable bit of information to our naval knowledge, but I don’t suppose this contention exercised any influence on the minds of my judges. I also called their attention to the fact that my shell had hit, while the Russian shot fell half a mile short. That remark nearly cost me my commission. A court-martial has no sense of humor.”

“I suppose everything is satisfactorily settled now?”

“Well, hardly that. You see, Continental nations are extremely suspicious of Britain’s good intentions, as indeed they are of the good intentions of each other. No government likes to have—well, what we might call a ‘frontier incident’ happen, and even if a country is quite in the right, it nevertheless looks askance at any official of its own who, through his stupidity, brings about an international complication. As concerns myself, I am rather under a cloud, as I told you. The court-martial acquitted me, but it did so with reluctance and a warning. I shall have to walk very straight for the next year or two, and be careful not to stub my toe, for the eyes of the Admiralty are upon me. However, I think I can straighten this matter out. I have six months’ leave coming on shortly, which I intend to spend in St. Petersburg. I shall make it my business to see privately some of the officials in the Admiralty there, and when they realize by personal inspection what a well-intentioned idiot I am, all distrust will vanish.”

“I should do nothing of the kind,” rejoined the girl earnestly, quite forgetting the shortness of their acquaintance, as she had forgotten the flight of time, while on his part he did not notice any incongruity in the situation. “I’d leave well enough alone,” she added.

“Why do you think that?” he asked.

“Your own country has investigated the matter, and has deliberately run the risk of unpleasantness by refusing to give you up. How, then, can you go there voluntarily? You would be acting in your private capacity directly in opposition to the decision arrived at by your government.”

“Technically, that is so; still, England would not hold the position she does in the world to-day if her men had not often taken a course in their private capacity which the government would never have sanctioned. As things stand now, Russia has not insisted on her demand, but has sullenly accepted England’s decision, still quite convinced that my act was not only an invasion of Russia’s domain, but a deliberate insult; therefore the worst results of an inconsiderate action on my part remain. If I could

see the Minister for Foreign Affairs, or the head of the Admiralty in St. Petersburg face to face for ten minutes, I'd undertake to remove that impression."

"You have great faith in your persuasive powers," she said demurely.

The Lieutenant began to stammer again.

"No, no, it isn't so much that, but I have great faith in the Russian as a judge of character. I suppose I am imagined to be a venomous, brow-beating, truculent Russophobe, who has maliciously violated their territory, flinging a shell into their ground and an insult into their face. They are quite sincere in this belief. I want to remove that impression, and there's nothing like an ocular demonstration. I like the Russians. One of my best friends is a Russian."

The girl shook her head.

"I shouldn't attempt it," she persisted. "Suppose Russia arrested you, and said to England, 'We've got this man in spite of you?'"

The Lieutenant laughed heartily.

"That is unthinkable: Russia wouldn't do such a thing. In spite of all that is said about the Russian Government, its members are gentlemen. Of course, if such a thing happened, there would be trouble. That is a point where we're touchy. A very cheap Englishman, wrongfully detained, may cause a most expensive campaign. Our diplomatists may act correctly enough, and yet leave a feeling of resentment behind. Take this very case. Britain says coldly to Russia:

"We disclaim the act, and apologize."

"Now, it would be much more to the purpose if she said genially:

"We have in our employment an impetuous young fool with a thirst for information. He wished to learn how a new piece of ordnance would act, so fired it off with no more intention of striking Russia than of hitting the moon. He knows much more about dancing than about foreign affairs. We've given him a month's leave, and he will slip across privately to St. Petersburg to apologize and explain. The moment you see him you will recognize he is no menace to the peace of nations. Meanwhile, if you can inculcate in him some cold, calm common-sense before he returns, we'll be ever so much obliged."

"So you are determined to do what you think the government should have done."

"Oh, quite. There will be nothing frigidly official about my unauthorized mission. I have a cousin in the embassy at St. Petersburg, but I shan't go near him; neither shall I go to an hotel, but will get quiet rooms somewhere that I may not run the risk of meeting any chance acquaintances."

"It seems to me you are about to afford the Russian Government an excellent opportunity of spiriting you off to Siberia, and nobody would be the wiser."

Drummond indulged in the free-hearted laugh of a youth to whom life is still rather a good joke.

"I shouldn't mind studying the Siberian system from the inside if they allowed me to return before my leave was up. I believe that sort of thing has been exaggerated by sensational writers. The Russian Government would not countenance anything of the kind, and if the minor officials tried to play tricks, there's always my cousin in the background, and it would be hard luck if I couldn't get a line to him. Oh, there's no danger in my project!"

Suddenly the girl came to a standstill, and gave expression to a little cry of dismay.

"What's wrong?" asked the Lieutenant.

"Why, we've walked clear out into the country!"

"Oh, is that all? I hadn't noticed."

"And there are people waiting for me. I must run."

"Nonsense, let them wait."

"I should have been back long since."

They had turned, and she was hurrying.

"Think of your new fortune, Miss Amhurst, safely lodged in our friend Morton's bank, and don't hurry for any one."

“I didn’t say it was a fortune: there’s only ten thousand dollars there.”

“That sounds formidable, but unless the people who are waiting for you muster more than ten thousand apiece, I don’t think you should make haste on their account.”

“It’s the other way about, Mr. Drummond. Individually they are poorer than I, therefore I should have returned long ago. Now, I fear, they will be in a temper.”

“Well, if anybody left me two thousand pounds, I’d take an afternoon off to celebrate. Here we are in the suburbs again. Won’t you change your mind and your direction; let us get back into the country, sit down on the hillside, look at the Bay, and gloat over your wealth?”

Dorothy Amhurst shook her head and held out her hand.

“I must bid you good-by here, Lieutenant Drummond. This is my shortest way home.”

“May I not accompany you just a little farther?”

“Please, no, I wish to go the rest of the way alone.”

He held her hand, which she tried to withdraw, and spoke with animation.

“There’s so much I wanted to say, but perhaps the most important is this: I shall see you the night of the 14th, at the ball we are giving on the ‘Consternation’?”

“It is very likely,” laughed the girl, “unless you overlook me in the throng. There will be a great mob. I hear you have issued many invitations.”

“We hope all our friends will come. It’s going to be a great function. Your Secretary of the Navy has promised to look in on us, and our Ambassador from Washington will be there. I assure you we are doing our best, with festooned electric lights, hanging draperies, and all that, for we want to make the occasion at least remotely worthy of the hospitality we have received. Of course you have your card, but I wish you hadn’t, so that I might have the privilege of sending you one or more invitations.”

“That would be quite unnecessary,” said the girl, again with a slight laugh and heightened color.

“If any of your friends need cards of invitation, won’t you let me know, so that I may send them to you?”

“I’m sure I shan’t need any, but if I do, I promise to remember your kindness, and apply.”

“It will be a pleasure for me to serve you. With whom shall you come? I should like to know the name, in case I should miss you in the crowd.”

“I expect to be with Captain Kempt, of the United States Navy.”

“Ah,” said the Lieutenant, with a note of disappointment in his voice which he had not the diplomacy to conceal. His hold of her hand relaxed, and she took the opportunity to withdraw it.

“What sort of a man is Captain Kempt? I shall be on the lookout for him, you know.”

“I think he is the handsomest man I have ever seen, and I know he is the kindest and most courteous.”

“Really? A young man, I take it?”

“There speaks the conceit of youth,” said Dorothy, smiling. “Captain Kempt, U.S.N., retired. His youngest daughter is just two years older than myself.”

“Oh, yes, Captain Kempt. I—I remember him now. He was at the dinner last night, and sat beside our captain. What a splendid story-teller he is!” cried the Lieutenant with honest enthusiasm.

“I shall tell him that, and ask him how he liked your song. Good-by,” and before the young man could collect his thoughts to make any reply, she was gone.

Skimming lightly over the ground at first, she gradually slackened her pace, and slowed down to a very sober walk until she came to a three-storied so-called “cottage” overlooking the Bay, then with a sigh she opened the gate, and went into the house by the servant’s entrance.

CHAPTER II —IN THE SEWING-ROOM

THREE women occupied the sewing-room with the splendid outlook: a mother and her two daughters. The mother sat in a low rocking-chair, a picture of mournful helplessness, her hands listlessly resting on her lap, while tears had left their traces on her time-worn face. The elder daughter paced up and down the room as striking an example of energy and impatience as was the mother of despondency. Her comely brow was marred by an angry frown. The younger daughter stood by the long window, her forehead resting against the pane, while her fingers drummed idly on the window sill. Her gaze was fixed on the blue Bay, where rested the huge British warship “Consternation,” surrounded by a section of the United States squadron seated like white swans in the water. Sails of snow glistened here and there on the bosom of the Bay, while motor-boats and what-not darted this way and that impudently among the stately ships of the fleet.

In one corner of the room stood a sewing-machine, and on the long table were piles of mimsy stuff out of which feminine creations are constructed. There was no carpet on the floor, and no ceiling overhead; merely the bare rafters and the boards that bore the pine shingles of the outer roof; yet this attic was notable for the glorious view to be seen from its window. It was an ideal workshop.

The elder girl, as she walked to and fro, spoke with nervous irritation in her voice.

“There is absolutely no excuse, mamma, and it’s weakness in you to pretend that there may be. The woman has been gone for hours. There’s her lunch on the table which has never been tasted, and the servant brought it up at twelve.”

She pointed to a tray on which were dishes whose cold contents bore out the truth of her remark.

“Perhaps she’s gone on strike,” said the younger daughter, without removing her eyes from H.M.S. “Consternation.” “I shouldn’t wonder if we went downstairs again we’d find the house picketed to keep away blacklegs.”

“Oh, you can always be depended on to talk frivolous nonsense,” said her elder sister scornfully. “It’s the silly sentimental fashion in which both you and father treat work-people that makes them so difficult to deal with. If the working classes were taught their place—”

“Working classes! How you talk! Dorothy is as much a lady as we are, and sometimes I think rather more of a lady than either of us. She is the daughter of a clergyman.”

“So she says,” sniffed the elder girl.

“Well, she ought to know,” replied the younger indifferently.

“It’s people like you who spoil dependents in her position, with your Dorothy this and Dorothy that. Her name is Amhurst.”

“Christened Dorothy, as witness godfather and godmother,” murmured the younger without turning her head.

“I think,” protested their mother meekly, as if to suggest a compromise, and throw oil on the troubled waters, “that she is entitled to be called Miss Amhurst, and treated with kindness but with reserve.”

“Tush!” exclaimed the elder indignantly, indicating her rejection of the compromise.

“I don’t see,” murmured the younger, “why you should storm, Sabina. You nagged and nagged at her until she’d finished your ball-dress. It is mamma and I that have a right to complain. Our dresses are almost untouched, while you can sail grandly along the decks of the ‘Consternation’ like a fully rigged yacht. There, I’m mixing my similes again, as papa always says. A yacht doesn’t sail along the deck of a battleship, does it?”

“It’s a cruiser,” weakly corrected the mother, who knew something of naval affairs.

“Well, cruiser, then. Sabina is afraid that papa won’t go unless we all have grand new dresses, but mother can put on her old black silk, and I am going if I have to wear a cotton gown.”

“To think of that person accepting our money, and absenting herself in this disgraceful way!”

“Accepting our money! That shows what it is to have an imagination. Why, I don’t suppose Dorothy has had a penny for three months, and you know the dress material was bought on credit.”

“You must remember,” chided the mother mildly, “that your father is not rich.”

“Oh, I am only pleading for a little humanity. The girl for some reason has gone out. She hasn’t had a bite to eat since breakfast time, and I know there’s not a silver piece in her pocket to buy a bun in a milk-shop.”

“She has no business to be absent without leave,” said Sabina.

“How you talk! As if she were a sailor on a battleship—I mean a cruiser.”

“Where can the girl have gone?” wailed the mother, almost wringing her hands, partially overcome by the crisis. “Did she say anything about going out to you, Katherine? She sometimes makes a confidant of you, doesn’t she?”

“Confidant!” exclaimed Sabina wrathfully.

“I know where she has gone,” said Katherine with an innocent sigh.

“Then why didn’t you tell us before?” exclaimed mother and daughter in almost identical terms.

“She has eloped with the captain of the ‘Consternation,’” explained Katherine calmly, little guessing that her words contained a color of truth. “Papa sat next him at the dinner last night, and says he is a jolly old salt and a bachelor. Papa was tremendously taken with him, and they discussed tactics together. Indeed, papa has quite a distinct English accent this morning, and I suspect a little bit of a headache which he tries to conceal with a wavering smile.”

“You can’t conceal a headache, because it’s invisible,” said the mother seriously. “I wish you wouldn’t talk so carelessly, Katherine, and you mustn’t speak like that of your father.”

“Oh, papa and I understand one another,” affirmed Katherine with great confidence, and now for the first time during this conversation the young girl turned her face away from the window, for the door had opened to let in the culprit.

“Now, Amhurst, what is the meaning of this?” cried Sabina before her foot was fairly across the threshold.

All three women looked at the newcomer. Her beautiful face was aglow, probably through the exertion of coming up the stairs, and her eyes shone like those of the Goddess of Freedom as she returned steadfastly the supercilious stare with which the tall Sabina regarded her.

“I was detained,” she said quietly.

“Why did you go away without permission?”

“Because I had business to do which could not be transacted in this room.”

“That doesn’t answer my question. Why did you not ask permission?”

The girl slowly raised her two hands, and showed her shapely wrists close together, and a bit of the forearm not covered by the sleeve of her black dress.

“Because,” she said slowly, “the shackles have fallen from these wrists.”

“I’m sure I don’t know what you mean,” said Sabina, apparently impressed in spite of herself, but the younger daughter clapped her hands rapturously.

“Splendid, splendid, Dorothy,” she cried. “I don’t know what you mean either, but you look like Maxine Elliott in that play where she—”

“Will you keep quiet!” interrupted the elder sister over her shoulder.

“I mean that I intend to sew here no longer,” proclaimed Dorothy.

“Oh, Miss Amhurst, Miss Amhurst,” bemoaned the matron. “You will heartlessly leave us in this crisis when we are helpless; when there is not a sewing woman to be had in the place for love or money. Every one is working night and day to be ready for the ball on the fourteenth, and you—you whom we have nurtured—”

“I suppose she gets more money,” sneered the elder daughter bitterly.

“Oh, Dorothy,” said Katherine, coming a step forward and clasping her hands, “do you mean to say I must attend the ball in a calico dress after all? But I’m going, nevertheless, if I dance in a morning wrapper.”

“Katherine,” chided her mother, “don’t talk like that.”

“Of course, where more money is in the question, kindness does not count,” snapped the elder daughter.

Dorothy Amhurst smiled when Sabina mentioned the word kindness.

“With me, of course, it’s entirely a question of money,” she admitted.

“Dorothy, I never thought it of you,” said Katherine, with an exaggerated sigh. “I wish it were a fancy dress ball, then I’d borrow my brother Jack’s uniform, and go in that.”

“Katherine, I’m shocked at you,” complained the mother.

“I don’t care: I’d make a stunning little naval cadet. But, Dorothy, you must be starved to death; you’ve never touched your lunch.”

“You seem to have forgotten everything to-day,” said Sabina severely. “Duty and everything else.”

“You are quite right,” murmured Dorothy.

“And did you elope with the captain of the ‘Consternation,’ and were you married secretly, and was it before a justice of the peace? Do tell us all about it.”

“What are you saying?” asked Dorothy, with a momentary alarm coming into her eyes.

“Oh, I was just telling mother and Sab that you had skipped by the light of the noon, with the captain of the ‘Consternation,’ who was a jolly old bachelor last night, but may be a married man to-day if my suspicions are correct. Oh, Dorothy, must I go to the ball in a dress of print?”

The sewing girl bent an affectionate look on the impulsive Katherine.

“Kate, dear,” she said, “you shall wear the grandest ball dress that ever was seen in Bar Harbor.”

“How dare you call my sister Kate, and talk such nonsense?” demanded Sabina.

“I shall always call you Miss Kempt, and now, if I have your permission, I will sit down. I am tired.”

“Yes, and hungry, too,” cried Katherine. “What shall I get you, Dorothy? This is all cold.”

“Thank you, I am not in the least hungry.”

“Wouldn’t you like a cup of tea?”

Dorothy laughed a little wearily.

“Yes, I would,” she said, “and some bread and butter.”

“And cake, too,” suggested Katherine.

“And cake, too, if you please.”

Katherine skipped off downstairs.

“Well, I declare!” ejaculated Sabina with a gasp, drawing herself together, as if the bottom had fallen out of the social fabric.

Mrs. Captain Kempt folded her hands one over the other and put on a look of patient resignation, as one who finds all the old landmarks swept away from before her.

“Is there anything else we can get for you?” asked Sabina icily.

“Yes,” replied Dorothy, with serene confidence, “I should be very much obliged if Captain Kempt would obtain for me a card of invitation to the ball on the ‘Consternation.’”

“Really!” gasped Sabina, “and may not my mother supplement my father’s efforts by providing you with a ball dress for the occasion?”

“I could not think of troubling her, Miss Kempt. Some of my customers have flattered me by saying that my taste in dress is artistic, and that my designs, if better known, might almost set a fashion in a small way, so I shall look after my costume myself; but if Mrs. Captain Kempt were kind enough to allow me to attend the ball under her care, I should be very grateful for it.”

“How admirable! And is there nothing that I can do to forward your ambitions, Miss Amhurst?”

“I am going to the ball merely as a looker-on, and perhaps you might smile at me as you pass by with your different partners, so that people would say I was an acquaintance of yours.”

After this there was silence in the sewing room until Katherine, followed by a maid, entered with tea and cakes. Some dress materials that rested on a gypsy table were swept aside by the impulsive Katherine, and the table, with the tray upon it, was placed at the right hand of Dorothy Amhurst. When the servant left the room, Katherine sidled to the long sewing table, sprang up lightly upon it, and sat there swinging a dainty little foot. Sabina had seated herself in the third chair of the room, the frown still adding severity to an otherwise beautiful countenance. It was the younger daughter who spoke.

“Now, Dorothy, tell us all about the elopement.”

“What elopement?”

“I soothed my mother’s fears by telling her that you had eloped with the captain of the ‘Consternation.’ I must have been wrong in that guess, because if the secret marriage I hoped had taken place, you would have said to Sabina that the shackles were on your wrists instead of off. But something important has happened, and I want to know all about it.”

Dorothy made no response to this appeal, and after a minute’s silence Sabina said practically:

“All that has happened is that Miss Amhurst wishes father to present her with a ticket to the ball on the ‘Consternation,’ and taking that for granted, she requests mother to chaperon her, and further expresses a desire that I shall be exceedingly polite to her while we are on board the cruiser.”

“Oh,” cried Katherine jauntily, “the last proviso is past praying for, but the other two are quite feasible. I’d be delighted to chaperon Dorothy myself, and as for politeness, good gracious, I’ll be polite enough to make up for all the courteous deficiency of the rest of the family.

‘For I hold that on the seas,
The expression if you please
A particularly gentlemanly tone implants,
And so do his sisters and his cousins and his aunts.’

Now, Dorothy, don’t be bashful. Here’s your sister and your cousin and your aunt waiting for the horrifying revelation. What has happened?”

“I’ll tell you what is going to happen, Kate,” said the girl, smiling at the way the other ran on. “Mrs. Captain Kempt will perhaps consent to take you and me to New York or Boston, where we will put up at the best hotel, and trick ourselves out in ball costumes that will be the envy of Bar Harbor. I shall pay the expense of this trip as partial return for your father’s kindness in getting me an invitation and your mother’s kindness in allowing me to be one of your party.”

“Oh, then it isn’t an elopement, but a legacy. Has the wicked but wealthy relative died?”

“Yes,” said Dorothy solemnly, her eyes on the floor.

“Oh, I am so sorry for what I have just said!”

“You always speak without thinking,” chided her mother.

“Yes, don’t I? But, you see, I thought somehow that Dorothy had no relatives; but if she had one who was wealthy, and who allowed her to slave at sewing, then I say he was wicked, dead or alive, so there!”

“When work is paid for it is not slavery,” commented Sabina with severity and justice.

The sewing girl looked up at her.

“My grandfather, in Virginia, owned slaves before the war, and I have often thought that any curse which may have been attached to slavery has at least partly been expiated by me, as foreshadowed in the Bible, where it says that the sins of the fathers shall affect the third or fourth generations. I was thinking of that when I spoke of the shackles falling from my wrists, for sometimes, Miss Kempt, you have made me doubt whether wages and slavery are as incompatible as you appear to

imagine. My father, who was a clergyman, often spoke to me of his father's slaves, and while he never defended the institution, I think the past in his mind was softened by a glamor that possibly obscured the defects of life on the plantation. But often in depression and loneliness I have thought I would rather have been one of my grandfather's slaves than endure the life I have been called upon to lead."

"Oh, Dorothy, don't talk like that, or you'll make me cry," pleaded Kate. "Let us be cheerful whatever happens. Tell us about the money. Begin 'Once upon a time,' and then everything will be all right. No matter how harrowing such a story begins, it always ends with lashing's and lashing's of money, or else with a prince in a gorgeous uniform and gold lace, and you get the half of his kingdom. Do go on."

Dorothy looked up at her impatient friend, and a radiant cheerfulness chased away the gathering shadows from her face.

"Well, once upon a time I lived very happily with my father in a little rectory in a little town near the Hudson River. His family had been ruined by the war, and when the plantation was sold, or allowed to go derelict, whatever money came from it went to his elder and only brother. My father was a dreamy scholar and not a business man as his brother seems to have been. My mother had died when I was a child; I do not remember her. My father was the kindest and most patient of men, and all I know he taught me. We were very poor, and I undertook the duties of housekeeper, which I performed as well as I was able, constantly learning by my failures. But my father was so indifferent to material comforts that there were never any reproaches. He taught me all that I know in the way of what you might call accomplishments, and they were of a strangely varied order—a smattering of Latin and Greek, a good deal of French, history, literature, and even dancing, as well as music, for he was an excellent musician. Our meager income ceased with my father's life, and I had to choose what I should do to earn my board and keep, like Orphant Annie, in Whitcomb Riley's poem. There appeared to be three avenues open to me. I could be a governess, domestic servant, or dressmaker. I had already earned something at the latter occupation, and I thought if I could set up in business for myself, there was a greater chance of gaining an independence along that line than either as a governess or servant. But to do this I needed at least a little capital.

"Although there had been no communication between the two brothers for many years, I had my uncle's address, and I wrote acquainting him with the fact of my father's death, and asking for some assistance to set up in business for myself, promising to repay the amount advanced with interest as soon as I was able, for although my father had never said anything against his elder brother, I somehow had divined, rather than knew, that he was a hard man, and his answering letter gave proof of that, for it contained no expression of regret for his brother's death. My uncle declined to make the advance I asked for, saying that many years before he had given my father two hundred dollars which had never been repaid. I was thus compelled, for the time at least, to give up my plan for opening a dressmaking establishment, even on the smallest scale, and was obliged to take a situation similar to that which I hold here. In three years I was able to save the two hundred dollars, which I sent to my uncle, and promised to remit the interest if he would tell me the age of the debt. He replied giving the information, and enclosing a receipt for the principal, with a very correct mathematical statement of the amount of interest if compounded annually, as was his legal right, but expressing his readiness to accept simple interest, and give me a receipt in full."

"The brute!" ejaculated Katherine, which remark brought upon her a mild rebuke from her mother on intemperance of language.

"Well, go on," said Katherine, unabashed.

"I merely mention this detail," continued Dorothy, "as an object lesson in honesty. Never before since the world began was there such a case of casting bread upon the waters as was my sending the two hundred dollars. My uncle appears to have been a most methodical man. He filed away my letter which contained the money, also a typewritten copy of his reply, and when he died, it was these documents which turned the attention of the legal arm who acted for him to myself, for my uncle

had left no will. The Californian firm communicated with lawyers in New York, and they began a series of very cautious inquiries, which at last resulted, after I had furnished certain proofs asked for, in my being declared heiress to my uncle's estate."

"And how much did you get? How much did you get?" demanded Katherine.

"I asked the lawyers from New York to deposit ten thousand dollars for me in the Sixth National Bank of this town, and they did so. It was to draw a little check against that deposit, and thus learn if it was real, that I went out to-day."

"Ten thousand dollars," murmured Katherine, in accents of deep disappointment. "Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough?" asked Dorothy, with a twinkle in her eyes.

"No, you deserve ten times as much, and I'm not going to New York or Boston at your expense to buy new dresses. Not likely! I will attend the ball in my calico."

Dorothy laughed quietly, and drew from the little satchel she wore at her side a letter, which she handed to Katherine.

"It's private and confidential," she warned her friend.

"Oh, I won't tell any one," said Katherine, unfolding it. She read eagerly half-way down the page, then sprang to her feet on the top of the table, screaming:

"Fifteen million dollars! Fifteen million dollars!" and, swinging her arms back and forth like an athlete about to leap, sprang to the floor, nearly upsetting the little table, tray and all, as she embraced Dorothy Amhurst.

"Fifteen millions! That's something like! Why, mother, do you realize that we have under our roof one of the richest young women in the world? Don't you see that the rest of this conference must take place in our drawing-room under the most solemn auspices? The idea of our keeping such an heiress in the attic!"

"I believe," said Sabina, slowly and coldly, "that Mr. Rockefeller's income is—"

"Oh, blow Mr. Rockefeller and his income!" cried the indignant younger sister.

"Katherine!" pleaded the mother tearfully.

CHAPTER III —ON DECK

THROUGHOUT the long summer day a gentle excitement had fluttered the hearts of those ladies, young, or not so young, who had received invitations to the ball on board the “Consternation” that night. The last touches were given to creations on which had been spent skill, taste, and money. Our three young women, being most tastefully and fashionably attired, were in high spirits, which state of feeling was exhibited according to the nature of each; Sabina rather stately in her exaltation; Dorothy quiet and demure; while Katherine, despite her mother’s supplications, would not be kept quiet, but swung her graceful gown this way and that, practising the slide of a waltz, and quoting W. R. Gilbert, as was her custom. She glided over the floor in rhythm with her chant.

“When I first put this uniform on
I said, as I looked in the glass,
‘It’s one to a million
That any civilian
My figure and form will surpass.’”

Meanwhile, in a room downstairs that good-natured veteran Captain Kempt was telling the latest stories to his future son-in-law, a young officer of the American Navy, who awaited, with dutiful impatience, the advent of the serene Sabina. When at last the ladies came down the party set out through the gathering darkness of this heavenly summer night for the private pier from which they were privileged, because of Captain Kempt’s official standing, to voyage to the cruiser on the little revenue cutter “Whip-poor-will,” which was later on to convey the Secretary of the Navy and his entourage across the same intervening waters. Just before they reached the pier their steps were arrested by the boom of a cannon, followed instantly by the sudden apparition of the “Consternation” picked out in electric light; masts, funnel and hull all outlined by incandescent stars.

“How beautiful!” cried Sabina, whose young man stood beside her. “It is as if a gigantic racket, all of one color, had burst, and hung suspended there like the planets of heaven.”

“It reminds me,” whispered Katherine to Dorothy, “of an overgrown pop-corn ball,” at which remark the two girls were frivolous enough to laugh.

“Crash!” sounded a cannon from an American ship, and then the white squadron became visible in a blaze of lightning. And now all the yachts and other craft on the waters flaunted their lines of fire, and the whole Bay was illuminated like a lake in Fairyland.

“Now,” said Captain Kempt with a chuckle, “watch the Britisher. I think she’s going to show us some color,” and as he spoke there appeared, spreading from nest to mast, a huge sheet of blue, with four great stars which pointed the corners of a parallelogram, and between the stars shone a huge white anchor. Cheers rang out from the crew of the “Consternation,” and the band on board played “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

“That,” said Captain Kempt in explanation, “is the flag of the United States Secretary of the Navy, who will be with us to-night. The visitors have kept very quiet about this bit of illumination, but our lads got on to the secret about a week ago, and I’ll be very much disappointed if they don’t give ‘em tit for tat.”

When the band on the “Consternation” ceased playing, all lights went out on the American squadron, and then on the flagship appeared from mast to mast a device with the Union Jack in the corner, a great red cross dividing the flag into three white squares. As this illumination flashed out the American band struck up the British national anthem, and the outline lights appeared again.

“That,” said the captain, “is the British man-o’-war’s flag.”

The “Whip-poor-will” speedily whisked the party and others across the sparkling waters to the foot of the grand stairway which had been specially constructed to conduct the elect from the tide to the deck. It was more than double as broad as the ordinary gangway, was carpeted from top to bottom, and on every step stood a blue-jacket, each as steady as if cast in bronze, the line forming, as one might say, a living handrail rising toward the dark sky.

Captain Kempt and his wife went first, followed by Sabina and her young man with the two girls in their wake.

“Aren’t those men splendid?” whispered Katherine to her friend. “I wish each held an old-fashioned torch. I do love a sailor.”

“So do I,” said Dorothy, then checked herself, and laughed a little.

“I guess we all do,” sighed Katherine.

On deck the bluff captain of the “Consternation,” in resplendent uniform, stood beside Lady Angela Burford of the British Embassy at Washington, to receive the guests of the cruiser. Behind these two were grouped an assemblage of officers and very fashionably dressed women, chatting vivaciously with each other. As Dorothy looked at the princess-like Lady Angela it seemed as if she knew her; as if here were one who had stepped out of an English romance. Her tall, proudly held figure made the stoutish captain seem shorter than he actually was. The natural haughtiness of those classic features was somewhat modified by a pro tem smile. Captain Kempt looked back over his shoulder and said in a low voice:

“Now, young ladies, best foot forward. The Du Maurier woman is to receive the Gibson girls.”

“I know I shall laugh, and I fear I shall giggle,” said Katherine, but she encountered a glance from her elder sister quite as haughty as any Lady Angela might have bestowed, and all thought of merriment fled for the moment; thus the ordeal passed conventionally without Katherine either laughing or giggling.

Sabina and her young man faded away into the crowd. Captain Kempt was nodding to this one and that of his numerous acquaintances, and Katherine felt Dorothy shrink a little closer to her as a tall, unknown young man deftly threaded his way among the people, making directly for the Captain, whom he seized by the hand in a grasp of the most cordial friendship.

“Captain Kempt, I am delighted to meet you again. My name is Drummond—Lieutenant Drummond, and I had the pleasure of being introduced to you at that dinner a week or two ago.”

“The pleasure was mine, sir, the pleasure was mine,” exclaimed the Captain with a cordiality equal to that with which he had been greeted. He had not at first the least recollection of the young man, but the Captain was something of an amateur politician, and possessed all a politician’s expertness in facing the unknown, and making the most of any situation in which he found himself.

“Oh, yes, Lieutenant, I remember very well that excellent song you—”

“Isn’t it a perfect night?” gasped the Lieutenant. “I think we are to be congratulated on our weather.”

He still clung to the Captain’s hand, and shook it again so warmly that the Captain said to himself:

“I must have made an impression on this young fellow,” then aloud he replied jauntily:

“Oh, we always have good weather this time of year. You see, the United States Government runs the weather. Didn’t you know that? Yes, our Weather Bureau is considered the best in the world.”

The Lieutenant laughed heartily, although a hollow note intervened, for the young man had got to the end of his conversation, realized he could not shake hands for a third time, yet did not know what more to say. The suavity of the politician came to his rescue in just the form the Lieutenant had hoped.

“Lieutenant Drummond, allow me to introduce my wife to you.”

The lady bowed.

“And my daughter, Katherine, and Miss Amhurst, a friend of ours—Lieutenant Drummond, of the ‘Consternation.’”

“I wonder,” said the Lieutenant, as if the thought had just occurred to him, “if the young ladies would like to go to a point where they can have a comprehensive view of the decorations. I—I may not be the best guide, but I am rather well acquainted with the ship, you know.”

“Don’t ask me,” said Captain Kempt. “Ask the girls. Everything I’ve had in life has come to me because I asked, and if I didn’t get it the first time, I asked again.”

“Of course we want to see the decorations,” cried Katherine with enthusiasm, and so bowing to the Captain and Mrs. Kempt, the Lieutenant led the young women down the deck, until he came to an elevated spot out of the way of all possible promenaders, on which had been placed in a somewhat secluded position, yet commanding a splendid view of the throng, a settee with just room for two, that had been taken from some one’s cabin. A blue-jacket stood guard over it, but at a nod from the Lieutenant he disappeared.

“Hello!” cried Katherine, “reserved seats, eh? How different from a theatre chair, where you are entitled to your place by holding a colored bit of cardboard. Here a man with a cutlass stands guard. It gives one a notion of the horrors of war, doesn’t it, Dorothy?”

The Lieutenant laughed quite as heartily as if he had not himself hoped to occupy the position now held by the sprightly Katherine. He was cudgelling his brain to solve the problem represented by the adage “Two is company, three is none.” The girls sat together on the settee and gazed out over the brilliantly lighted, animated throng. People were still pouring up the gangways, and the decks were rapidly becoming crowded with a many-colored, ever-shifting galaxy of humanity. The hum of conversation almost drowned the popular selections being played by the cruiser’s excellent band. Suddenly one popular selection was cut in two. The sound of the instruments ceased for a moment, then they struck up “The Stars and Stripes for Ever.”

“Hello,” cried Katherine, “can your band play Sousa?”

“I should say we could,” boasted the Lieutenant, “and we can play his music, in a way to give some hints to Mr. Sousa’s own musicians.”

“To beat the band, eh?—Sousa’s band?” rejoined Katherine, dropping into slang.

“Exactly,” smiled the Lieutenant, “and now, young ladies, will you excuse me for a few moments? This musical selection means that your Secretary of the Navy is on the waters, and I must be in my place with the rest of the officers to receive him and his staff with all ceremony. Please promise you will not leave this spot till I return: I implore you.”

“Better put the blue-jacket on guard over us,” laughed Katherine.

“By Jove! a very good idea.”

Dorothy saw all levity depart from his face, giving way to a look of sternness and command. Although he was engaged in a joke, the subordinate must see no sign of fooling in his countenance. He said a sharp word to a blue-jacket, who nimbly sprang to the end of the settee, raised his hand in salute, and stiffened himself to an automaton. Then the girls saw the tall figure of the Lieutenant wending its way to the spot where the commander stood.

“I say, Dorothy, we’re prisoners. I wonder what this Johnny would do if we attempted to fly. Isn’t the Lieutenant sumptuous?”

“He seems a very agreeable person,” murmured Dorothy.

“Agreeable! Why, he’s splendid. I tell you, Dorothy, I’m going to have the first dance with him. I’m the eldest. He’s big enough to divide between two small girls like us, you know.”

“I don’t intend to dance,” said Dorothy.

“Nonsense, you’re not going to sit here all night with nobody to speak to. I’ll ask the Lieutenant to bring you a man. He’ll take two or three blue-jackets and capture anybody you want.”

“Katherine,” said Dorothy, almost as severely as if it were the elder sister who spoke, “if you say anything like that, I’ll go back to the house.”

“You can’t get back. I’ll appeal to the guard. I’ll have you locked up if you don’t behave yourself.”

“You should behave yourself. Really, Katherine, you must be careful what you say, or you’ll make me feel very unhappy.”

Katherine caught her by the elbow, and gave it an affectionate little squeeze.

“Don’t be frightened, Miss Propriety, I wouldn’t make you unhappy for the world. But surely you’re going to dance?”

Dorothy shook her head.

“Some other time. Not to-night. There are too many people here. I shouldn’t enjoy it, and—there are other reasons. This is all so new and strange to me: these brilliant men and beautiful women—the lights, the music, everything—it is as if I had stepped into another world; something I had read about, or perhaps dreamed about, and never expected to see.”

“Why, you dear girl, I’m not going to dance either, then.”

“Oh, yes, you will, Katherine; you must.”

“I couldn’t be so selfish as to leave you here all alone.”

“It isn’t selfish at all, Katherine. I shall enjoy myself completely here. I don’t really wish to talk to any one, but simply to enjoy my dream, with just a little fear at the bottom of my heart that I shall suddenly wake up, rubbing my eyes, in the sewing room.”

Katherine pinched her.

“Now are you awake?”

Dorothy smiled, still dreaming.

“Hello!” cried Katherine, with renewed animation, “they’ve got the Secretary safe aboard the lugger, and they seem to be clearing the decks for action. Here is my dear Lieutenant returning; tall even among tall men. Look at him. He’s in a great hurry, yet so polite, and doesn’t want to bump against anybody. And now, Dorothy, don’t you be afraid. I shall prove a perfect model of diffidence. You will be proud of me when you learn with what timidity I pronounce prunes and prism. I think I must languish a little at him. I don’t know quite how it’s done, but in old English novels the girls always languished, and perhaps an Englishman expects a little languishment in his. I wonder if he comes of a noble family. If he doesn’t, I don’t think I’ll languish very much. Still, what matters the pomp of pageantry and pride of race—isn’t that the way the poem runs? I love our dear little Lieutenant for himself alone, and I think I will have just one dance with him, at least.”

Drummond had captured a camp-stool somewhere, and this he placed at right angles to the settee, so that he might face the two girls, and yet not interrupt their view. The sailor on guard once more faded away, and the band now struck up the music of the dance.

“Well,” cried Drummond cheerfully, “I’ve got everything settled. I’ve received the Secretary of the Navy: our captain is to dance with his wife, and the Secretary is Lady Angela’s partner. There they go!”

For a few minutes the young people watched the dance, then the Lieutenant said:

“Ladies, I am disappointed that you have not complimented our electrical display.”

“I am sure it’s very nice, indeed, and most ingenious,” declared Dorothy, speaking for the first time that evening to the officer, but Katherine, whose little foot was tapping the deck to the dance music, tossed her head, and declared nonchalantly that it was all very well as a British effort at illumination, but she begged the young man to remember that America was the home of electricity.

“Where would you have been if it were not for Edison?”

“I suppose,” said the Lieutenant cheerfully, “that we should have been where Moses was when the candle went out—in the dark.”

“You might have had torches,” said Dorothy. “My friend forgets she was wishing the sailors held torches on that suspended stairway up the ship’s side.”

“I meant electric torches—Edison torches, of course.”

Katherine was displeased at the outlook. She was extremely fond of dancing, and here this complacent young man had planted himself down on a camp stool to talk of electricity.

“Miss Kempt, I am sorry that you are disappointed at our display. Your slight upon British electrical engineering leaves us unscathed, because this has been done by a foreign mechanic, whom I wish to present to you.”

“Oh, indeed,” said Katherine, rather in the usual tone of her elder sister. “I don’t dance with mechanics, thank you.”

She emphasized the light fantastic word, but the Lieutenant did not take the hint; he merely laughed again in an exasperatingly good-natured way, and said:

“Lady Angela is going to be Jack Lamont’s partner for the next waltz.”

“Oh,” said Katherine loftily, “Lady Angela may dance with any blacksmith that pleases her, but I don’t. I’m taking it for granted that Jack Lamont is your electrical tinsmith.”

“Yes, he is, and I think him by all odds the finest fellow aboard this ship. It’s quite likely you have read about his sister. She is a year older than Jack, very beautiful, cultured, everything that a grande dame should be, yet she has given away her huge estate to the peasantry, and works with them in the fields, living as they do, and faring as they do. There was an article about her in one of the French reviews not long ago. She is called the Princess Natalia.”

“The Princess Natalia!” echoed Katherine, turning her face toward the young man. “How can Princess Natalia be a sister of Jack Lamont? Did she marry some old prince, and take to the fields in disgust?”

“Oh, no; Jack Lamont is a Russian. He is called Prince Ivan Lermontoff when he’s at home, but we call him Jack Lamont for short. He’s going to help me on the Russian business I told you of.”

“What Russian business?” asked Katherine. “I don’t remember your speaking of it.”

Dorothy went white, edged a little way from her friend, while her widening eyes flashed a warning at the Lieutenant, who, too late, remembered that this conversation on Russia had taken place during the walk from the bank. The young man coughed slightly behind his open hand, reddened, and stammered:

“Oh, I thought I had told you. Didn’t I mention the prince to you as we were coming here?”

“Not that I recollect,” said Katherine. “Is he a real, genuine prince? A right down regular, regular, regular royal prince?”

“I don’t know about the royalty, but he’s a prince in good standing in his own land, and he is also an excellent blacksmith.” The Lieutenant chuckled a little. “He and his sister have both been touched a good deal by Tolstoian doctrine. Jack is the most wonderful inventor, I think, that is at present on the earth, Edison notwithstanding. Why, he is just now engaged on a scheme by which he can float houses from the mountains here down to New York. Float them—pipe-line them would perhaps be a better term. You know they have pipe-lines to carry petroleum. Very well; Jack has a solution that dissolves stone as white sugar dissolves in tea, and he believes he can run the fluid from the quarries to where building is going on. It seems that he then puts this liquid into molds, and there you have the stone again. I don’t understand the process myself, but Jack tells me it’s marvelously cheap, and marvelously effective. He picked up the idea from nature one time when he and I were on our vacation at Detroit.”

“Detroit, Michigan?”

“The Detroit River.”

“Well, that runs between Michigan and Canada.”

“No, no, this is in France. I believe the real name of the river is the Tarn. There’s a gorge called Detroit—the strait, you know. Wonderful place—tremendous chasm. You go down in a boat, and all the tributary rivers pour into the main stream like jets from the nozzle of a hose. They tell me this is caused by the rain percolating through the dead leaves on the surface of the ground far above, and thus the water becomes saturated with carbonic acid gas, and so dissolves the limestone until the

granite is reached, and the granite forms the bed of these underground rivers. It all seemed to me very wonderful, but it struck Jack on his scientific side, and he has been experimenting ever since. He says he'll be able to build a city with a hose next year."

"Where does he live?"

"On the cruiser just at present. I was instrumental in getting him signed on as John Lamont, and he passed without question. No wonder, for he has scientific degrees from all sorts of German universities, from Oxford, and one or two institutions in the States. When at home he lives in St. Petersburg."

"Has he a palace there?"

Drummond laughed.

"He's got a blacksmith shop, with two rooms above, and I'm going to stop with him for a few months as soon as I get my leave. When the cruiser reaches England we pay off, and I expect to have nothing to do for six months, so Jack and I will make for St. Petersburg."

"Why do you call him Lamont? Is it taken from his real name of what-d'ye-call-it-off?"

"Lermontoff? Yes. The Czar Demetrius, some time about the beginning of the seventeenth century, established a Scottish Guard, just as Louis XI did in France two hundred years before, and there came over from Scotland Lamonts, Carmichaels, Buchanans and others, on whom were bestowed titles and estates. Prince Ivan Lermontoff is a descendant of the original Lamont, who was an officer in the Scottish Guard of Russia.

"So he is really a Scotchman?"

"That's what I tell him when he annoys me, as I am by way of being a Scotchman myself. Ah, the waltz is ended. Will you excuse me a moment while I fetch his Highness?"

Dorothy inclined her head, and Katherine fairly beamed permission.

"Oh, Dorothy," she exclaimed, when the Lieutenant was out of hearing, "think of it! A real prince, and my ambition has never risen higher than a paltry count, or some plebeian of that sort. He's mine, Dorothy; I found him first."

"I thought you had appropriated the Lieutenant?"

"What are lieutenants to me? The proud daughter of a captain (retired) cannot stoop to a mere lieutenant."

"You wouldn't have to stoop far, Kate, with so tall a man as Mr. Drummond."

"You are beginning to take notice, aren't you, Dot? But I bestow the Lieutenant freely upon you, because I'm going to dance with the Prince, even if I have to ask him myself.

She'll toddle away, as all aver,
With the Lord High Executioner.

Ah, here they come. Isn't he perfectly splendid? Look at his beard! Just the color of a brand-new twenty-dollar gold piece. See that broad ribbon diagonally across him. I wonder what it means. And gaze at those scintillating orders on his breast. Good gracious me, isn't he splendid?"

"Yes, for a blacksmith. I wonder if he beat those stars out on his anvil. He isn't nearly so tall as Lieutenant Drummond."

"Dorothy, I'll not allow you to disparage my Prince. How can you be so disagreeable? I thought from the very first that the Lieutenant was too tall. If the Prince expects me to call him 'your Highness,' he'll be disappointed."

"You are quite right, Kate. The term would suit the Lieutenant better."

"Dorothy, I believe you're jealous."

"Oh, no, I'm not," said Dorothy, shaking her head and laughing, and then "Hush!" she added, as Katherine was about to speak again.

The next moment the young men stood before them, and, introductions being soberly performed, the Prince lost no time in begging Katherine to favor him with a dance, to which request the young woman was graciously pleased to accede, without, however, exhibiting too much haste about her acceptance, and so they walked off together.

CHAPTER IV —“AT LAST ALONE”

“SOME one has taken the camp stool,” said Lieutenant Drummond. “May I sit here?” and the young woman was good enough to give the desired permission.

When he had seated himself he glanced around, then impulsively held out his hand.

“Miss Amhurst,” he said, “how are you?”

“Very well, thank you,” replied the girl with a smile, and after half a moment’s hesitation she placed her hand in his.

“Of course you dance, Miss Amhurst?”

“Yes, but not to-night. I am here merely as a looker-on in Vienna. You must not allow politeness to keep you away from the floor, or, perhaps, I should say the deck. I don’t mind being alone in the least.”

“Now, Miss Amhurst, that is not a hint, is it? Tell me that I have not already tired you of my company.”

“Oh, no, but I do not wish you to feel that simply because we met casually the other day you are compelled to waste your evening sitting out.”

“Indeed, Miss Amhurst, although I should very much like to have the pleasure of dancing with you, there is no one else here that I should care to ask. I have quailed under the eagle eye of my Captain once or twice this evening, and I have been rather endeavoring to keep out of his sight. I fear he has found something new about me of which to disapprove, so I have quite determined not to dance, unless you would consent to dance with me, in which case I am quite ready to brave his reproachful glances.”

“Have you done anything wrong lately?”

“Heaven only knows! I try not to be purposely wicked, and indeed have put forth extra efforts to be extra good, but it seems all of no avail. I endeavor to go about the ship with a subdued, humble, unobtrusive air, but this is rather difficult for a person of my size. I don’t think a man can droop successfully unless he’s under six feet in height.”

Dorothy laughed with quiet content. She was surprised to find herself so much at her ease with him, and so mildly happy. They shared a secret together, and that of itself was an intangible bond linking him with her who had no ties with any one else. She liked him; had liked him from the first; and his unconcealed delight in her company was gratifying to a girl who heretofore had found none to offer her the gentle courtesies of life.

“Is it the Russian business again? You do not look very much troubled about it.”

“Ah, that is—that is—” he stammered in apparent confusion, then blurted out, “because you—because I am sitting here. Although I have met you but once before, it seems somehow as if I had known you always, and my slight anxiety that I told you of fades away in your presence. I hope you don’t think I am forward in saying this, but really to-night, when I saw you at the head of the gangway, I could scarcely refrain from going directly to you and greeting you. I am afraid I made rather a hash of it with Captain Kempt. He is too much of a gentleman to have shown any surprise at my somewhat boisterous accosting of him, and you know I didn’t remember him at all, but I saw that you were under his care, and chanced it. Luckily it seems to have been Captain Kempt after all, but I fear I surprised him, taking him by storm, as it were.”

“I thought you did it very nicely,” said Dorothy, “and, indeed, until this moment I hadn’t the least suspicion that you didn’t recognize him. He is a dear old gentleman, and I’m very fond of him.”

“I say,” said the Lieutenant, lowering his voice, “I nearly came a cropper when I spoke of that Russian affair before your friend. I was thinking of—of—well, I wasn’t thinking of Miss Kempt—”

“Oh, she never noticed anything,” said Dorothy hurriedly. “You got out of that, too, very well. I thought of telling her I had met you before while she and I were in New York together, but the

opportunity never seemed—well, I couldn't quite explain, and, indeed, didn't wish to explain my own inexplicable conduct at the bank, and so trusted to chance. If you had greeted me first tonight, I suppose"—she smiled and looked up at him—"I suppose I should have brazened it out somehow."

"Have you been in New York?"

"Yes, we were there nearly a week."

"Ah, that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?"

"I have walked up and down every street, lane and alley in Bar Harbor, hoping to catch a glimpse of you. I have haunted the town, and all the time you were away."

"No wonder the Captain frowns at you! Have you been neglecting your duty?"

"Well, I have been stretching my shore leave just a little bit. I wanted to apologize for talking so much about myself as we walked from the bank."

"It was very interesting, and, if you remember, we walked farther than I had intended."

"Were your friends waiting for you, or had they gone?"

"They were waiting for me."

"I hope they weren't cross?"

"Oh, no. I told them I had been detained. It happened not to be necessary to enter into details, so I was saved the task of explanation, and, besides, we had other interesting things to discuss. This function on the cruiser has loomed so large as a topic of conversation that there has been little need of any other subject to talk about for several days past."

"I suppose you must have attended many grander occasions than this. Although we have endeavored to make a display, and although we possess a reasonably efficient band, still, a cruiser is not exactly designed for the use to which it is being put to-night. We have many disadvantages to overcome which are not met with in the sumptuous dwellings of New York and Bar Harbor."

The girl's eyes were on the deck for some moments before she replied, then she looked across at the dancers, and finally said:

"I think the ball on the 'Consternation' quite equals anything I have ever attended."

"It is nice of you to say that. Praise from—I won't name Sir Hubert Stanley—but rather Lady Hubert Stanley—is praise, indeed. And now, Miss Amhurst, since I have confessed my fruitless wanderings through Bar Harbor, may I not have the pleasure of calling upon you to-morrow or next day?"

Her eyes were dreamily watching the dancers.

"I suppose," she said slowly, with the flicker of a smile curving those enticing lips, "that since you were so very friendly with Captain Kempt to-night he may expect you to smoke a cigar with him, and it will possibly happen that Katherine and I, who are very fond of the Captain, may chance to come in while you are there."

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