

# **The Honorable Percival eBook**

## **The Honorable Percival**

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# Page 1

## Their boat had sailed

"Well, did you ever! Where did *you* come from?"

Her hair, still damp, was hanging about her shoulders, and she carried a bundle of bath-towels under her arm

"Mr. Hascombe!" she demanded breathlessly, "you'll take me out in the surf-boat, won't you?"

At a break-neck speed towards the wharf

"I don't know what makes me so everlastingly silly!" she said fiercely trying to swallow the rising sobs, "but he *won't* understand!"

"I like the way your mouth looks when you read it"

"Roberta!" he called sternly. "What are you doing out here?"

"You will have to join the crowd," suggested Bobby when Percival complained of not seeing her as often as he wished

"If you want to hold my hand, Mr. Hascombe, you are welcome to it"

He sat on a table swinging his feet in unison with a lot of other young feet, while he sipped lemonade from the same glass as Bobby Boynton

"Isn't that the prettiest thing you ever saw?" she asked, glancing at him over her shoulder

"It's quite worth while," he said, "getting a jab in the wrist, to have you looking after me like this"

"I'm so sorry!" whispered Bobby, putting her arm impulsively around his heaving shoulders

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE HONORABLE PERCIVAL

I

A BLIGHTED BEING

The Honorable Percival Hascombe came aboard the Pacific liner about to sail from San Francisco, preceded by a fur coat, a gun-case, two pigskin bags, a hat-box, and a valet. He was tall and slender, and moved with an air of fastidious distinction. He wore a small mustache, a monocle, and an expression of unutterable ennui. His costume consisted of a smart tweed traveling-suit, with cap to match, white spats, and a pair of binoculars swung across his shoulders. In his eyes was the look, carefully maintained, of one who has sounded the depths of human tragedy.

Since his advent into the world twenty-eight years before, he had been made to feel but one responsibility. His elder brother, having persistently refused to provide himself with a wife and heir, the duty of perpetuating the family name fell upon him, Percival Hascombe, second son of the late Earl of Westenhanger, of Hascombe Hall, fifth in descent from the great Westenhanger whose marble effigy adorns the dullest and most respectable cathedral in southern England.

From the time Percival had been able to cast a discriminating eye, his adoring family had presented the feminine flowers of the country-side for his inspection. One after another they had met with his grave consideration and subsequent disapprobation. Fears had begun to be entertained that he would follow in the solitary footsteps of his bachelor brother, when Lady Hortense Vevay appeared on the scene.



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Lady Hortense, with her mother, the Duchess of Dare, had come down to Devon for the shooting one autumn, seeking rest after a strenuous social season following her presentation at court. She had been there less than a week when she bagged the biggest game in the neighborhood. The explanation was obvious: the Lady Hortense had no faults to be discovered. The closest inspection through two pairs of glasses, Percival's and her own, failed to reveal a flaw. Her birth and position were equal to his own; her beauty, if attenuated, was sufficient; while her discriminating taste amounted to a virtue. The Honorable Percival proffered his hand, and was accepted. Hascombe Hall rang with applause.

All might have been well had not mother and daughter been pressed to seal the compact by a closer intimacy in a ten-days' visit at the hall. The young people were allowed to bask uninterrupted in the light of each other's perfections, and the result was disastrous. Two persons who have achieved distinction as soloists do not take kindly to duets. A few days after the Vevays' return to London, Lady Hortense wrote a perfectly worded note, and asked to be released from the engagement.

The utterly preposterous fact that a Hascombe of Hascombe Hall had been jilted was too amazing a circumstance to be concealed, and the county buzzed with rumors. The Honorable Percival, whose pride had sustained a compound fracture, set sail immediately for America. After a hurried trip across the continent, he was embarking again, this time for Hong-Kong, where a sympathetic married sister held out embracing arms, and a promise of refuge from wagging tongues.

As he moved languidly down the deck and sank into the steamer-chair that bore his name, he assured himself for the fortieth time since leaving England that life bored him to tears. He had sounded its joys and its sorrows, he had exhausted its thrills; it was like a scenic railway over which he was compelled to ride after every detail had become monotonously familiar. There was nothing more for him to learn about life, nothing more for him to feel. At least that is what the Honorable Percival thought. But when one reckons too confidently on having exhausted the varieties of human experience, one is apt to get a jolt.

Carefully selecting a cigarette from a gold case, he struck a light, and, after a whiff or two, lay back and, closing his eyes on the stir and confusion, gave himself up to painful reflections. His shrunken self-esteem, like a feathered thing exposed to wet weather, was clamoring for a sunny spot in which to expand to natural proportions. Had he been able to remain at home, the unending chorus of feminine praise would soon have dried his draggled feathers and left him preening himself contentedly in the comforting assurance that Lady Hortense was in no way worthy of him. But being confronted thus suddenly with the necessity of supplying his egotism with all its

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nourishment, he found himself unequal to the task. Behind every consoling thought stalked that totally incredible "No." He tortured his brain for possible reasons for Hortense's deflection, but could find none. Detail by detail he reviewed their acquaintance from the first time he had bowed over her fingers, in Lord Carlton's hunting-lodge, to the moment he had touched his lips to the same fingers in formal farewell on the terrace at Hascombe Hall. It had been such a well-bred courtship from the start, so thoroughly approved by both sides, so perfectly conducted throughout!

Then, following suddenly on this smooth course of events, came a series of bumps that made Percival wince as he recalled them: protests, evasions, humiliating questions on the part of the public, and then ignominious flight. He shuddered as he thought of the dull, wet days on the Atlantic and his hideous week in America. He had been in a perpetual state of protest against everything from the hotel service to what he termed the "crass vulgarity of the States."

There had been but one oasis in the desert of gloom through which he had traveled, and that had been on his interminable trip across the continent, when for ten brief minutes his blight had been lifted, and he had caught a breath of the incense for which his soul hungered.

It was at a little station in Wyoming that he, a convalescent from love, had for the first time in weeks managed to look up and take a bit of amatory nourishment. He was standing alone on the rear platform of the observation-car, arms on railing, watching with no interest whatever the taking off of mail-bags. Suddenly within his line of vision came a stalwart young chap and a girl, each astride a bronco. They drew rein at the platform, cursorily scanned the waiting train, glanced at him, then at each other, and, apparently without the slightest reason, burst into unrestrained merriment. Percival continued to survey them calmly and haughtily through his monocle. His first glance had revealed the fact that the girl was strikingly pretty. Her lithe young body showed round and comely in its khaki suit and brown leggings. Her black mane was braided in two short, thick plaits with a dash of scarlet ribbons at the ends. Blue eyes, full of daring, danced under the blackest of brows, and the smile she flashed at her companion revealed a dimple of distracting proportions.

As Percival gazed he was quite oblivious of the fact that the laugh was at his expense. In fact, he accorded her darting glances a far more flattering interpretation, and when her escort dismounted, and disappeared within the station, he deliberately caught her eye and held it. There was a touch of daring in her face and figure, an evident sense of security in the fact that the train was already beginning to move. He shifted his position from the end of the platform to the side next the station, and she met the challenge by gathering up her reins and keeping pace with the slow-moving train.

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For a short distance road and track lay parallel, and as the train slowly got under way, the bronco was put to a run. Side by side, not ten feet apart, Percival and the girl moved abreast, their eyes keeping company. He had never seen anything so vitally young and untrammelled as she was. She rode superbly, like an Indian, leaning well forward, gripping the bronco with her knees, with one hand grasping his mane. Every muscle was tense with life, every nerve a-quiver with glee. Before the young Englishman knew it, his own sluggish blood was stirring in his veins through sympathy. Then the train began to gain upon her, and throwing herself back in the saddle, she shook a vanquished head. As Percival raised his cap she wheeled her horse, and, standing in the stirrups, blew an audacious kiss from her finger-tips. The next instant she was dashing away across the wide, bleak prairies, the only living thing in sight, her scarlet ribbons a streak of color in the dull-gray landscape.

Percival had taken heart of grace from that airy kiss. It stood to him as a symbol that, though one of the sex had proved a deserter to his standard, there were still volunteers. He treasured the incident as a king treasures the homage of his humblest subject when rebellion is rife in the kingdom. On such trifles often hang one's self-esteem.

When the stir and bustle on deck became so lively that he was no longer able to indulge in introspection, he got up and indifferently joined the moving throng. The warning had sounded for those going ashore, and the numerous gangways were crowded. Passengers lined the promenade-deck, shouting and waving to the crowd on the wharf below. From the bridge-deck the captain could be heard cheerfully swearing through a megaphone at the second officer below. Chinese deck-stewards glided about in their felt slippers, trying to attach the right person to the right steamer-chair. Cabin-boys scurried about with baskets of fruit and flowers and other sea-going impedimenta that, after one appreciative glance from the recipient, are usually consigned to the ice-box. All was noise and confusion.

Percival's critical eye swept the line of human backs that presented themselves at the railing. The same old types! He could describe them with his eyes shut: the conventional globe-trotters, avid to obtain and to impart information; business men comparing statistics and endlessly discussing the tariff; rich wanderers in quest of health; poor missionaries in quest of "foreign fields"; fussy Frenchmen; stolid Germans; a few suspicious-looking Englishmen; and always the ubiquitous Americans, who had the same effect upon him that a highly colored cloth has on the delicate sensibilities of a certain large animal.

The most conspicuous example of the last class was a somewhat noisy young person in a still more resonant steamer-coat who hung at an angle of forty-five degrees over the railing, and exchanged confidences of a personal nature with an old man on the wharf twenty feet below. Every time Percival's walk brought him toward the bow of the boat, his eyes were offended by that blue-and-lavender steamer-coat and by a pair of beaded-leather slippers with three straps across the instep and absurdly high French

heels. Could any one but an American, he soliloquized, be guilty of starting on a journey in such a costume?

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The prospect of being imprisoned between decks for four weeks, with this heterogeneous collection appalled him. His only safety lay in maintaining a rigid and uncompromising aloofness. He would discourage all advances from the start, he would promptly nip in the bud the first sign of intrusion. He had left the only country an Englishman regards as the proper place for existence, to cross two abominable seas and an even more abominable continent, for the sole purpose of privacy, and privacy he meant to have at all costs.

As the *Saluria* weighed anchor and steamed out of the Golden Gate, he went below to see that his valet had made satisfactory disposition of his varied belongings. His state-room was at the end of a short passage leading from the main, one, and he was displeased at finding the deep ledge under the passage window completely filled with flowers and fruit that evidently belonged to some one occupying a room in the same passage.

He rang for the cabin-boy.

"Remove that greengrocer's shop!" he commanded peremptorily. "It is abominably stuffy down here. We can't have the port-holes filled up like that, you know."

The bland face of the young Chinaman assumed an expression of mild inquiry.

"Take away!" ordered Percival, resorting to gesture.

"No can," said the boy, calmly. "All same b'long one missy. Missy b'long cap'n."

Percival turned impatiently to his valet, who was coming through the passage.

"Judson, get those things out of the window, and keep them out. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir. But where shall I put them, sir?"

"On the floor—in the sea—wherever you like," said Percival, as he slipped his arms into the top-coat that was being respectfully held for him.

Once again on deck, he found that the wind had acquired a sudden edge. The short chop of the waves and scudding of gray clouds indicated that the customary bit of rough weather after leaving the Golden Gate was to be expected. Percival was not happy in rough weather. He attributed it to extreme sensitiveness to atmospheric conditions. Whatever the cause, the result remained that he was not happy.

The motion of the vessel made him pause a moment. The casual observer would have said he stopped to cast an experienced eye on a sky that could not deceive him; but the casual observer does not always know. It is a long distance between the prow and the stern of an ocean liner, when the deck is composed of alternating mountains and valleys

that one has to climb and descend. Percival found it decidedly hard going before he reached his steamer-chair.

When he did so, he encountered a sight that filled him with chagrin. Wrapped in the folds of his rug was that obnoxious blue-and-lavender steamer-coat, with its owner snugly ensconced within, her eyes closed, and her cheek brazenly reposing on the Hascombe crest that adorned the pillow under her head!

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Percival paused, irresolute, and his nostrils quivered. He wanted very much to sit down, and he was unwilling to occupy any other steamer-chair, for fear its owner might claim it. There was nothing left for him but to pace up and down that undulating deck until the young person opened her eyes and discovered, by glances which he would render unmistakable, that she was trespassing.

When his third round brought him in front of her, and he saw that she was awake, he carefully adjusted his monocle, and turned upon her a look that was not unfamiliar to certain menials in the employ of Hascombe Hall.

But no withering blight followed his look. Instead, the wearer of the gaudy coat sat up suddenly and said, with a radiant smile:

“Well, did you ever! Where did *you* come from?”

[Illustration: “Well, did you ever! Where did *you* come from?”]

By a curious twist, his mind suddenly beheld a rolling prairie in place of the tumbling sea, and a comely figure in khaki and brown leggings in place of the muffled form in the hideous coat. His suspicion was confirmed when he met the frank gaze of the bluest eyes that ever held a challenge.

Instead of being amused, Percival was profoundly annoyed. The incident on the train had been pretty enough in its way, but it was closed. As it stood, it had been rather artistic and satisfying. A wild, unknown bit of femininity dashing into his life for ten throbbing minutes, then vanishing into the sunset, was one thing, and this very tangible young person in clothes of the wrong cut and color, addressing him in terms of easy familiarity, was quite another.

“I beg your pardon,” he said stiffly. “Did you address me?”

Her eyes clouded.

“Why, I thought—I thought you were some one I knew. Is this your chair?”

“It is. Pray do not discommode yourself?”

“That is all right,” she answered, trying to disentangle her high heels from his rug. “I’ve had my nap, thank you. Think I’ll go down and get a sandwich.”

Percival waited in frigid silence until she had departed; then he sank limply into the warm nest she had just left, and closed his eyes on a world that failed in all respects to give satisfaction.

## II

### A COUNTER-IRRITANT

If there is a place on earth where one meets with the present face to face, it is on shipboard. Whether salt water and sea air act as a narcotic on memories of the past and dreams of the future has never been proved, but it is undeniably true that at sea time becomes a static thing and concerns itself solely with the affairs of the moment.

During that first long afternoon Percival slept; and if the faithless Hortense essayed to haunt his dreams, she was drowned in the profundity of his slumber. It was not until his valet touched his arm and respectfully submitted the information that the first gong had sounded for dinner that he woke to the fact that the *Saluria* was still swinging from the trough to the summit of increasingly high waves and that the deck was virtually deserted.



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"If you are not feeling quite the thing, sir," said the valet, solicitously, "shall I serve your dinner on deck, sir?"

Instantly Percival rose.

"By no means," he said coldly. "Get me a sherry and bitters. I'll dress at once."

Proud indifference to every passing sensation was manifest in each detail of his careful toilet when he took his place at the captain's table some twenty minutes later. With a haughty inclination of the head, he seated himself and, apparently unaware of the glances cast upon him, devoted himself to an absorbed perusal of the menu. He was quite used to being looked at; in fact, he suffered the admiration of the public with noble tolerance: only it must keep its distance; he could have no presuming.

On his arrival the conversation suffered a sudden chill; but the captain, who knew the signs of approaching icebergs, soon steered the talk back into warm waters. It was evident that the captain was in the habit of occupying the center of the stage, a fact which should have gratified Percival, inasmuch as it focused attention at the far end of the table. Strange to say, he was not gratified. He conceived an immediate dislike for the large, good-looking officer, who seemed built especially to show off his smart uniform, and who brazenly ignored all conventions save those of navigation, His peculiarities of speech, which at another time might have gratified Percival and confirmed the report he was bearing back to England that Americans were, if possible, more obnoxious at home than abroad, now jarred upon him grievously. He found it difficult to follow the story that was causing the present merriment.

"And when my Nelson eye discovered," the captain was concluding, "that Ah Foo was perambulating an affair in Shanghai, I summoned the slave and asked him if his mind was set on becoming festooned in matrimony. He thought it was. So I up and bought the damsel for him, paid one hundred Mex. for her, and, if you'll believe me, haven't had a dime's worth of work out of Ah Foo since!"

Percival found himself on the dry beach of non-comprehension when the tide of laughter followed the receding story,

"A cup of very strong tea and dry toast," he said over his shoulder to the waiting Chinaman.

As his eyes returned to the study of the menu, he was for the first time aware that the objectionable young person, with a glitter of rhinestones in her hair, was sitting next the captain, giving him story for story, and laughing much more than the occasion seemed to Percival to warrant. He particularly disliked to hear a woman laugh aloud in public, and he was vexed with himself that he looked up every time her laugh rang out. To be sure, she was well worth looking at. Despite the clashing colors of her costume, he

could not deny the charm of her blue eyes and black hair, and of the red lips whose only fault was that they smiled too much. It was her dress, her freedom, her unrestrained gaiety that offended Percival. In England a girl of her age would still be a trembling bud, modestly hiding behind a mass of elderly foliage.

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The absence of a chaperon puzzled him. The two other women at the table, a Mrs. Weston and her daughter, had evidently just met her, and the captain seemed to be the only one who had known her before. He called her "Bobby," and treated her with the easy familiarity of a big brother.

"Don't talk to me about Wyoming!" he was saying now, in answer to some boast of hers. "Anybody can have it that wants it. I make 'em a present of it, with Dakota thrown in. You remember, Bobby, the last time I was at the ranch? All hands on deck at two bells in the morning watch, a twenty-mile sail on a bucking bronco, then back to the ranch, where we shipped a cargo of food that would sink a tramp, A gallon or so of soup in the hold, a saddle of venison, a broiled antelope, and six vegetables in the forward hatchway, with three kinds of pie in the bunkers. It was a regular food jag three times a day. It took me just two weeks at sea to get over those two days on land."

Percival stirred uneasily. His tea and toast were long in coming, and a certain haunted look was dawning on his face. Through the port-holes he could see the deep-purple sky rising to give place to still deeper-purple sea as the ship rose with sickening regularity. He took an olive.

"Isn't there a good deal of motion?" asked Mrs. Weston, a delicate, appealing blonde, whose opinions were always tentative until they received the stamp of masculine approval.

"Motion!" thundered the captain, bringing down a huge tattooed fist on the table. "Isn't that like a woman? When I have ordered this calm weather especially for Mrs. Weston's benefit! I've a good mind to whistle for a hurricane."

"No, no, please!" she protested in mock terror.

Percival turned away from the foolish chatter. Matters of a deep and sinister nature occupied his mind. He felt within him wars and rumors of wars. He wished that the curtains would stop swinging out from the wall in that silly fashion. It was deuced uncanny to see them hang at an angle of twenty-five degrees, then slowly and mysteriously fall back into their places. He tried not to watch them, but it was even more dangerous to look at the man next him breaking soft-boiled eggs into a glass tumbler. He took another olive.

An electric fan overhead whirled incessantly, and the bright, flashing blades smote his eyes with diabolical precision. The circular motion, instead of cooling him, brought beads of perspiration to his brow.

"Who'll have some Chinese chow?" asked the captain. "I always order a dish or two the first night out. Can't give you any birds'-nest soup—"

A violent shudder passed over Percival, and he made a lightning calculation of the distance from the table to the stairway. In doing so he noted that it was a spiral stairway. Why in the name of heaven was everything round? The port-holes, the revolving-chairs, the electric fans, the plates, the olives—

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At the thought of olives, all the pent-up possibilities became imminent certainties. He rose dizzily, collided with the Chinaman bringing his tea, and made blindly for the stairs. Half-way up, he staggered; each step rose to meet him, then fell away from his foot the moment he touched it. He grasped the baluster-rail, and stood wildly clinging, like a shipwrecked sailor to a mast. He was dazed, dumb, paralyzed with fear of the inevitable, and aware only of the burst of uncontrollable laughter that had followed his abrupt retreat. Somebody from above held out a succoring hand, at which he grasped frantically. Stumbling, half blind, this unfortunate victim to atmospheric conditions was guided up the remaining stops and out on deck, where he was anchored to the railing and kindly left to his fate.

### III

#### CONVALESCENCE

During the monotonous days that followed, the Honorable Percival Hascombe discovered that the satisfaction of being exclusive is usually tempered by the discomfort of being bored. So lofty and forbidding had been his manner that no one had ventured to intrude even a casual good morning. A bachelor under thirty, with a competence of such dimensions that it had entailed incompetency, and a doting family that danced attendance upon his every whim, he was figuratively as well as literally at sea in this new environment. At times he faltered in his stern determination not to allow any one to become acquainted with him. It was only the fear that any leniency might result in undue liberty on the part of some aggressive American that caused him to preserve his deep seclusion.

Bored, blase, blighted, he had one more affliction to endure. The young person had gotten hopelessly on his nerves; in fact, she was the most disturbing object on the horizon. She played shuffle-board in front of his chair when he wanted to read; she practised new dance-steps with the first officer when he wanted to sleep; she caused him to lift his unwilling eyes a dozen times an hour by her endless circuits of the deck. She was on terms of friendship with everybody on board except himself, including the second class and steerage. There seemed no end to her activities, no limit to her enthusiasm. The more she attracted his unwilling attention, the more persistently he ignored her.

As the time passed and danger of intrusion lessened, his ennui increased. One dull, humid day, when the whole world resembled a dripping sponge, Percival reached the limit of his endurance. The canvas was down, and nothing could be seen but long vistas of slippery decks, with barefooted Chinese sailors everlastingly mopping and slopping about in the wet. He had counted the five hundred and fiftieth raindrop that clung to the red life-belt at the rail when he saw the young Scotchman next him look at his watch.

“What time do you make it?” asked Percival, and his voice sounded almost strange to him.

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"Eleven," said the man, getting to his feet; "aboot time for the fun to begin in the bathing-tank."

Ordinarily Percival would have allowed the conversation to end there, but he felt now that he would be risking his sanity if he sat there any longer counting raindrops.

"What's taking place?" he asked listlessly.

"The usual morning diversion: the captain's daughter is teaching a couple of bairns to swim."

"Surely they won't go in on a beastly day like this!"

"I'll be bound they do. Shall we go find out?"

Forward a number of people were already hanging over the rail, highly diverted at what was taking place in the big canvas tank on the deck below. Percival, looking down, beheld the young person standing on the lower rung of a ladder, coaxing a small boy to jump from the platform above. Now, on several occasions in the past Percival had met Disillusion face to face in a bathing-suit. A certain attenuated memory of the faithless Hortense made him wince even yet. But the round and graceful figure poised in dancing impatience on the ladder-rung defied criticism. Much as he disapproved of the public exhibition, he could not check a breath of admiration.

The small boy shivering on the platform vibrated between courage and fear; then, urged by the shouts from above, and lured by that sparkling face and those outstretched arms below, he leaped. Shrieks of laughter followed as his fat little body spanked the water, and was quickly righted and deposited, gasping, but victorious, on a life-buoy. Then the small girl must dive, and after that all three must splash and jump and float and swim like a trio of mad young porpoises.

The Honorable Percival was a good swimmer himself, and his interest kindled as he watched the perfect ease with which the young person handled herself in the narrow confines of the tank. While he deplored the wretched taste of the proceeding, he had to admit that she carried it off with admirable lack of self-consciousness. She swam as she did everything else, with impetuous joy, and seemed as unaware of the admiring glances of the spectators as the children themselves.

"Did ye see her the other day when she climbed to the crow's-nest?" asked the Scotchman, with enthusiasm.

"No," said Percival, curtly.

"The wind was blowing at a bittie, but she went up the rigging like a sailor. I doubt if the lass would be afraid of the de'il himself."

“Probably jolly well used to all this sort of thing,” said Percival, wearily.

“Indeed, no; this is her first sea-voyage. She never saw a ship before.”

“I thought you said she was the captain’s daughter.”

“So she is; but he’s had her out on a Western ranch since she was a bit of a lass. Quite a romance!”

“Really?”

“Yes. Her mother was a play-actress. Ran off with an English nobleman. Left the captain and the lassie in the lurch, and died before she reached England. I had the story from the purser.”



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"Where's the girl going now?"

"The captain is fetching her the round trip to Hong-Kong, to break off some love-affair at home, I believe. But if she's as canny as she's bonny, I'll wager she'll outwit him before they have done."

Percival, who at first had remained in the back row of the spectators, during this recital moved to the front, and now as he looked down he suddenly encountered the laughing glance of the person under discussion. She was lazily watching him from where she floated in the water, with her loosened hair circling in a dark cloud about her head. The expression on her face gave him instant cause for alarm.

Since that first day when she had spoken to him, he had studiously avoided meeting her eye, and had even come to congratulate himself on having removed from her mind the suspicion of a former encounter. But there was that in the glance that now met and held his that dispelled any such hope. It indicated all too clearly that she had not been deceived, and that she was treating the matter with unbecoming levity.

Percival returned haughtily to his steamer-chair, but not to count raindrops. He had food for new and most irritating reflections. The girl's refusal to take his cue and ignore the very mild flirtation that had occurred on the car-platform placed him in a situation at once awkward and embarrassing. He rather prided himself on never taking advantage of any tribute of admiration that might be tendered him by the less experienced of her sex. On more than one occasion in the past he had heroically extinguished the tender flames that his own charms had kindled in susceptible bosoms. He had come to share the belief of his mother that he possessed a rare degree of chivalry in protecting women against himself.

But this impossible child of Nature either did not know the rules of the game, or chose to ignore them. He would be forced to continue this distasteful partnership memory, or else dissolve it with a casual reference to the episode, which would dispose of it for good and all. He had about decided upon the latter course when Fate forestalled him.

On his way down to luncheon he encountered Miss Boynton coming up the companionway. Her hair, still damp, was hanging about her shoulders, and she carried a bundle of bath-towels under her arm. Both stood politely aside, then both started forward, meeting midway.

[Illustration: Her hair, still damp, was hanging about her shoulders, and she carried a bundle of bath-towels under her arm.]

"I—I—beg your pardon," said Percival.

"What for?" she asked.

“For—for not recognizing you the other day.” It was not in the least what he had meant to say, but it was said, and he must go on as best he could. “Not expecting to see you, you know, and all that.”

She stood shaking her hair in the breeze and smiling. While she evidently bore no resentment, she was not helping him out in his apology.

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"One sees so many faces in traveling," he went on lamely, "and all so much alike."

"I'd have known your face anywhere," she said.

He took a step downward, but she did not move. Instead she leaned nonchalantly against the wall and began braiding her hair.

"I know your name, too," she said, with a look half daring and half quizzical. "I looked you up on the passenger-list."

"But how did you know—"

"Oh, it was easy to spot you. You were the only man on board who would fit 'The Honorable Percival Hascombe and Valet.'"

Percival found her scoffing tone intolerable. He descended two more steps, but she stopped him with a request.

"If you don't mind," she said, flinging the finished braid over her shoulder, "I wish you'd write your grand name on my Panama hat sometime; it's going to be a souvenir of the trip."

With an unintelligible answer, he made his escape. His worst fears were realized: he had given an inch; she had taken an ell. The crack in the shell of his privacy was widening alarmingly and peeping through, he shuddered at what he saw.

## IV

### COUNTER-CURRENTS

Day after day the steamship *Saluria* sailed the most amiable of seas. So clear was the atmosphere at times that a glimpse could be had of the planet Venus disporting herself in the heavens at high noon. Life on shipboard became permeated with that spirit of fellowship which is apt to make itself felt the moment the restraints of convention are lifted. Even the Honorable Percival succumbed in a measure to the insidious charm of the long, lazy days that were punctuated only by the ship's bells.

He was still an apparently indifferent spectator of all that was going on, but the fact that he was a spectator showed that he was relaxing the rigid rules he had laid down for himself. The only person who addressed him during the day was Bobby Boynton, who gave him a free and easy greeting when they met in the morning, and then seemed to forget his existence. His fear that she would follow up the conversation begun in the companionway was apparently groundless, for she seemed ridiculously engrossed in other things.

Among the half-dozen young people on board who were perpetually organizing tournaments, dances, card-parties, and concerts, she was the most indefatigable. Not being responsible to any one for her actions, and possessing a creative imagination, she indulged in escapades that provided the older people with their chief topic of conversation. Her sternest critics, however, smiled as they shook their heads.

The captain from the first had treated her very much as he treated the other passengers. The parental role was not a familiar one, and he shirked it. The only time that he rose to a sense of duty was when he found her in the writing-room, her head bent over a desk. Then rumor said authority was brusquely asserted, letters were confiscated, and tears flowed instead of ink.

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About the time the Honorable Percival was congratulating himself on having put her in her proper place, and having kept her there, his confidence received a shock. Coming on deck one day, he found her again seated in his steamer-chair. This time she made no pretense of rising, but obligingly made a place for him on the foot-rest. The invitation was loftily declined.

"I've been waiting a coon's age for you," she said, with an audacious upward glance. "I wanted to tell you that I've put you on the program for a song at the concert to-morrow night."

"Quite impossible; I shouldn't think of such a thing for a moment," he began; then curiosity got the better of his annoyance. "But if I may ask, how on earth did you know that I sang?"

Bobby's eyes danced, and her submerged dimple came to the surface.

"I didn't," she said; "but they dared me to ask you, and I wouldn't take a dare, would you?"

"I am afraid I don't quite follow you," said Percival.

"Well, you see," explained Bobby, "they dared me to ask you, and I didn't mind, because I was dead sure you sang. A person ought to be able to do anything with a voice like yours."

Percival stroked his small mustache meditatively.

"As a matter of fact, you know," he said in a tone from which the chill had vanished, "I suppose an English voice is rather conspicuous among Americans, isn't it?"

"Yours is," said Bobby; "that is, what I've heard of it."

And then she was gone like a flash, leaving the Honorable Percival to cogitate upon the extraordinary manners of American girls, and a certain cleverness they at times displayed. Lady Hortense Vevay, for instance, had had four uninterrupted weeks in which to discover anything unusual in his voice, and he must confess she had been rather stupid about it. But why had that impossible young American ruined a pretty compliment by her parting shot? Did she feel that she had any claim upon him? Did she expect him to pay her any attention? Preposterous!

The first break in the lazy routine of the voyage came when the dim outline of the Hawaiian Islands gradually took definite shape in the form of old Diamond Head which loomed strangely out of the water. Sea-gulls came out to meet the steamer, circling on white wings against the blue, and the air grew soft and fragrant with the odors of flowers and tropical fruits.



As the *Saluria* slowly swung into the harbor and dropped anchor, the promenade-deck was full of lively, chattering people, all arrayed in white, and all eager for the first glimpse of the strange land. Dozens of naked native boys were swimming about the steamer, causing general merriment by their dexterity in diving for coins. One saucy brown imp who had just come up with a silver piece in his mouth, caught sight of the Englishman in the crowd above, and with a shrewdness born of experience called out: "Hi there, English Johnny! Me no 'Merican boy; me Johnny Bull boy. Me no want dime; want shilling! Here you are! Aw right!"

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The invitation met no response. The Honorable Percival greeted with calm disdain the laugh that followed it. He was not in the least interested in impertinent young Hawaiians. A matter of much greater importance occupied his attention. He had just been informed by the purser that, owing to the crowded condition of the steamer, he would be compelled to share his stateroom with another passenger during the remainder of the voyage. This catastrophe darkened even the tropical sun. He was indignant with the company in San Francisco that had failed to explain this contingency; he was angry with the purser for not being able to change the disagreeable order of things; but most of all he was furious with the unknown stranger, whom in the blackness of his mood he pictured as either a fat German or a chattering American.

So perturbed was he over this circumstance that he could not refrain from venting his ill humor on somebody, and his valet being unavailable at the time, he took it out upon himself.

"No, I am not going ashore," he said somewhat curtly to Bobby Boynton, who had organized a party with sufficient diversions to last two days instead of one.

"You'd better come along," said Bobby. "We are going to shoot up the town of Honolulu."

"I don't know that I should particularly care for that," said Percival, coldly.

She looked at him with frank curiosity.

"Say, why don't you ever let yourself have a good time?" she asked. "Everybody else is going except the captain. He's got the gout. Says he's carrying his grandfather's cocktails around in his starboard toe."

She waited for a response, but none came.

"It's going to be awfully stupid here with everybody gone," she persisted. "Why won't you come?"

She was dressed in a short white serge and the Panama hat, which as yet was innocent of autographs. It was astonishing what a difference the absence of conflicting colors made in her appearance.

For a moment Percival's decision wavered before those pleading tones, but the next he caught sight of Mrs. Weston and Elise evidently watching with amused interest the result of Bobby's bold move.

"Another dare, as I think you call it?" he asked. "You'll have to excuse me, Miss Boynton. Sight-seeing is quite out of my line."



He watched the gay party board the launch, Mrs. Weston, the two girls, and the college boys whose raucous voices and offhand manners had grated upon him ever since leaving San Francisco. As the small boat got away from the steamer, one white-clad figure separated itself suddenly from the rest, and waved a friendly hand to him. He started, then, lifting his cap stiffly, moved away from the rail. The little minx was pretty; in fact, he acknowledged for the first time that she was distractingly pretty. But she was also presuming, and presumption was a thing he would permit in no one.



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For the next few hours Percival found life not worth living. He sat on the hot deck in solitary state, gloved in white chamois, with a newspaper over his white-clad knees, engaged in the forlorn hope of trying to keep clean while the ship was coaling. Finding this an impossibility, he took refuge in the deserted-writing-room, where all the port-holes were closed and the air as dead as that of an Egyptian tomb.

Satirical letters home were Percival's chief diversion. In them he expressed his unqualified disapproval of the Western Hemisphere. The assurance that they would be read by an adoring group of feminine relatives gave wing to an imagination that was not wont to soar. Today, however, inspiration was lacking. On opening the drawer of the first desk he came to, he found a letter half begun which had evidently been thrust there suddenly and forgotten. Across the top of the page was written:

“My darling H-----”

Percival closed the drawer hurriedly. The conjunction of the letter H with that particular adjective started echoes. He circled the room in search of a desk not haunted by epistolary ghosts.

“Particularly asinine brand of pen!” he exclaimed in disgust. “Must have been used for a corkscrew!”

Corkscrews changed the current of his thought into a more pleasant channel. But even the mild consolation thus suggested was denied him. The smoking-room was closed. He wandered disconsolately to his state-room and, flinging himself on the narrow sofa, stared at the ceiling. Every fiber of his being shrieked for England and for the revivifying warmth of adulation.

His mind dwelt longingly upon Hascombe Hall and the acres of parkland, moorland, and farmland that were its inheritance. Then he thought bitterly upon that paragon of perfection who had caused his banishment. How completely she would have filled the role of mistress of that noble hall! He pictured her in irreproachable toilets, pouring tea in the east drawing-room, and receiving her guests with the exact shade of warmth that their social positions demanded.

As he recalled her manner of cool distinction and her polished, impersonal phrases, another feminine figure dared to flit between him and this lady of manifold merit. No sooner would he indignantly banish her image than she would come dancing back, a gay little figure, with too much color in her checks and too much daring in her eyes.



“Why don’t you let yourself have a good time?” she had asked, and the question repeated itself now with maddening insistence. Was he, who had always had everything, now missing something—something that other people had?

When two bells sounded he reluctantly went below for lunch. The prospect of a tete-a-tete with the captain was anything but pleasant. He understood about half that the officer said, and with that half he usually disagreed. His first remark was unfortunate:

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"All this dirt means more washing down of the decks, I suppose. Beastly racket it makes. Is there any earthly reason why it should always be done at dawn?"

"Most one-sidedly," said the captain; "it gives the sailors a chance to see the sunrise."

There was a short silence, then Percival asked:

"What's the name of that young South American who went ashore with your daughter?"

"South American?" repeated the captain. "I pass."

"The blatant youth who sits at your left."

"Oh, you mean Vaughn. He's no South American. He hails from Virginia."

"Thought he said he was a Southerner. May I trouble you for the mustard?"

"Did the Daughter of the Revolution go along?" asked the captain.

"Beg pardon?"

"Mrs. Weston. She's a D.A.R. She has told me so five times; that's how I know."

"Really, why was she chosen to be the Daughter of the Regiment?"

"The Revolution, not the regiment. You remember that little skirmish that took place in '75?"

Percival considered this thrust beneath his notice. His simmering antagonism for the captain was nearing the boiling-point.

"I say," he said, "will you kindly arrange for a bit of air to enter this room? It's ghastly, perfectly ghastly."

"Sure," said the captain, dexterously mixing a salad of alligator pears. "Ah Foo, open some of those ports and let in the coal-dust. Have some of this tropical mess?"

"Thanks, no. I'm not specially fit today. Had a beastly night of it. Fancy having to keep one's umbrella up in the berth to keep the light from the passage out of one's eyes! I don't believe such a thing could happen on a British steamer. Can't you manage to give me another state-room?"

"That's the purser's job; he's the room-clerk," said the captain. "I'm only the skipper."

Percival glanced quickly at the weather-beaten face, but found no guiding expression.

"I can't say I found your purser over-civil," he went on. "He insists on putting another passenger in my state-room. Nothing was said about it in San Francisco, nothing whatever. I shall report the matter at my first opportunity."

"I bet you've drawn that Chinese bigwig that's booked from here," said the captain, grinning.

Percival pushed back his plate. A German or an American had appalled him, but a Chinaman!

"I say, this is a bit thick, you know. What time does the next launch go ashore?" he demanded, with, a fierce determination to find the purser and demand satisfaction.

"About to start now," said the captain, adding, with a twinkle: "Better think twice about that Chinaman. If he takes the upper berth, his queue'd come in mighty handy to hang your umbrella on."

Percival dashed up the stairs. He had been seeking an excuse for going ashore for the last four hours, and now he felt that he had one. It was of the utmost importance, he assured himself, that he see the purser without further delay.

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### V

#### STRANDED

When a man insists too strenuously upon his rights, the imps of perversity invariably combine to thwart him. Percival was aware of their pursuing footsteps from the moment he went ashore and lost his umbrella, to the hour of his return to the dock, when he found himself face to face with a situation of baffling perplexity.

No sooner had he stepped from the launch that had started him on his double quest, which ostensibly had only the purser for its object, than he was surrounded by a noisy, gesticulating crowd. Insistent requests that he should buy a string of shells, adopt a chameleon, wear a wreath of carnations, and take a drive, were proffered in broken English, and he made his escape by jumping into a motor-car and slamming the door.

"Where to, sir?" asked the gratified chauffeur.

"Take me where everybody goes," directed Percival.

"The Pali? Waikiki? Punch-Bowl? Aquarium?"

"Yes, yes. Go on. You see, as a matter of fact, I'm looking for some one."

Percival's first impression of Honolulu was that of a futurist sketch, a streak of green standing for the palm-shaded streets, a streak of scarlet representing the royal Poinciana, and various impressionistic dots indicating native Hawaiians. The motor in which he found himself was very ancient, having evidently traveled from the center to the circumference of civilization by easy stages. Its age and asthmatic condition should have made it an object of veneration to the chauffeur, but such was not the case. Like a belated express, it was driven through the town and out into the open country. Luxurious villas, jungles of cacti, Chinese tea-houses, taro patches, banana plantations—all presented one mad panorama to Percival, who jolted from side to side on the back seat.

Presently there was a precipitous halt, and the chauffeur indicated that he was to get out.

"What for?" asked Percival, crossly.

"The Pali," said the chauffeur, impressively. "Eighteen hundred feet above the level of the sea, where the early inhabitants of Oahu made their last stand against the enemy."

"I'm quite sure she isn't here," said Percival. Then he caught himself, and went into a rather elaborate explanation to cover his confusion. "You see, I'm looking for the

purser. The purser of the *Saluria*, you know. He's put a nasty Chinaman in my state-room, and I've got to find him before the ship sails."

"Everybody comes first to the Pali," said the man.

Percival glanced skeptically at the great granite cliff that seemed such an unpromising retreat for pursers, then he stepped out of the motor, and made his way around the sharp angle of stone wall. As he did so, a gale struck him that sent his hat careening over the precipice. He gazed after it in chagrin. The fact that one of the great panoramic views of the world lay at his feet was quite obliterated by the unhappy knowledge that an English Bowler had landed in the fork of a distant tree, defying recovery.

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"Where next, sir?" asked the chauffeur, surprised at his quick return.

"Anywhere out of this damned wind!" said Percival between his teeth.

"Your friend might be at Waikiki Beach," suggested the chauffeur, amiably.

"He's *not* my friend. He's a purser, I tell you. Wants to put—"

But his words were lost in the whirl of the engine. All the way back to Honolulu and through the town Percival was seeing this strange, tropical land through the blue eyes of a certain little untraveled Western savage. What a revelation it must be to one used to the barren alkali deserts of Wyoming, where, nothing grew but sage-bush and cacti! It wouldn't be half bad, he thought, to hear what she had to say about it all. But where was one to look for her?

"We might try the pool-rooms," suggested the chauffeur.

Percival looked at him blankly, then he remembered.

"Take me to a hat shop," he said peremptorily.

When they arrived at Waikiki Beach he got out of the motor with more alacrity than was habitual to him, and entered the cocoanut-grove. By Jove! he thought, it was not a bad sight to see the palms dangling over the beach like that, with the jolly breakers rolling in, and the bay full of changing colors. Coral reefs! That's what caused the color; he had read it in a book somewhere. Air was good, too, fruity and salty and not too hot. For the moment he forgot his cares; he even forgot that his new hat was one of those peculiar shapes which Englishmen often pore over in the advertising pages of American magazines for the sole purpose of enjoying a sense of superb and vast superiority.

As he scanned the beach his eye was caught by three ladies and three natives standing about a surf-boat in animated discussion. The youngest of the ladies, who wore a bathing-suit of conspicuous hue and did most of the talking, suddenly detached herself from the others and came flying across the sand toward him.

"Mr. Hascombe!" she demanded breathlessly, "you'll take me out in the surf-boat, won't you? The boys haven't come, and Mrs. Weston is afraid for me to go alone."

[Illustration: "Mr. Hascombe!" she demanded breathlessly, "you'll take me out in the surf boat, won't you?"]

"But my dear young lady, it's quite impossible. I'm looking for the purser. They say he's going to put—"

"Bother the purser! We haven't a minute to lose. The steamer sails at five."

“But really, I can’t. And I quite agree with Mrs. Weston that it would be most awfully improper for you to go alone.”

“Well, if you don’t take me, I *will* go alone!” she said defiantly; then she suddenly changed her tactics, and added with childish insistence: “But you *are* going to take me now, aren’t you? Please?”

He could scarcely believe his senses when, a few minutes later, he found himself frantically struggling into a rented bathing-suit in a steaming little bath-house that gave evidence of recent use. But a glance into the mirror that hung on the door not only convinced him of his identity, but added the comforting assurance that he was not by any means looking his worst in his present garb. He paused long enough to flex a presentable bicep with pardonable pride.



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"Hurry up!" called Bobby, joyfully, as he emerged. "There are three Kanakas and you and I. Can you swim?"

"Rather," said Percival.

They ran down to the beach to where the canoe, a long, narrow affair with curious outriders, awaited them.

"The last boat that went out capsized," cried Bobby, gleefully taking her place behind the second Kanaka. "The men were in the water five minutes, but the sharks didn't happen to notice them."

"Sharks!" exclaimed Percival in consternation.

The native in the front seat grinned and shook his head.

"No sharks this side of the reef," he said reassuringly.

As they paddled out over the blue water, Bobby's enthusiasm dashed like spray against the rock of Percival's seeming indifference.

"Isn't this the most heavenly place that ever happened!" she cried. "Look at the mountains back yonder against the sky, and the mists in the valleys, and all the color spilling out over the edge of the land into the sea!"

"Ye-es," said Percival; "but as a matter of fact I find the mosquitos peculiarly trying."

Now, if the truth must be told, it was not the mosquitos which were disturbing the Honorable Percival. It was not even his failure to find the purser. It was the disconcerting discovery that this persistent young woman from the States was making him do things he didn't in the least want to do. He glared gloomily at the back of her white neck, across which a dark lock floated tantalizingly.

As the space between them and the shore widened, the surf became stronger and higher, until by the time they reached the reef the canoe was dancing like a shell on the water.

"Afraid?" asked Bobby, teasingly, flashing a smile over her shoulder.

"I don't think," said Percival, and, immediately was chagrined at having indulged in such a vulgar expression.

"I love it!" cried Bobby. "It's more fun than a bucking bronco. Is this our wave? All right! Let her go!"

The Kanaka in the prow gave the signal, and the boat backed into the monster wave just as it was about to break. Simultaneously the paddles were plunged into the water, and a vigorous pull was made for the shore. There was a merry whiz of rushing waters, a breathless suspension in midair, then a gigantic upheaval as the boat plunged over the crest of the wave and shot like an arrow two miles in two minutes to the beach.

Percival, as has been stated, rather prided himself on having exhausted life's thrills. When one has made a reputation for lugging at Caux and has raced on skis with the professionals at St. Moritz, not to boast of a daring flight in a French aeroplane, one is apt to be rather superior to minor sports. But the present thrilling diversion, shared with a girl as irresistibly pretty and as utterly abandoned to the joy of the moment as Bobby Boynton, proved quite the most exhilarating pastime in which he had ever indulged.

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Again and again the boat went out, and again and again Mrs. Weston beckoned frantically and imperatively from the pier. The last time she looked at her watch, she seemed to give up the hope of getting the delinquents back to shore. Gathering up scarfs and parasols, she and Elise hurried back to the steamer.

For the two young people in the boat the steamer had ceased to exist. Everything had ceased to exist except a narrow shell of wood, three brown-backed natives, and one towering wave after another that shot them through delicious realms of space and left them, with every nerve a-tingle, laughing into each other's eyes.

"Ripping, isn't it?" cried Percival on the third return. "Shall we have one more go?"

"I expect we ought to be going," said Bobby, shaking the salt spray out of her hair. "I don't see anything of Mrs. Weston and Elise."

"I don't want to see anything of them," cried Percival, recklessly. "Right ho! once more!"

She was nothing loath, and they went blithely forth to meet the next big wave.

"Mrs. Weston *has* gone!" said Bobby when they again touched shore. "Wouldn't it be a lark if we were left?"

No bullet ever brought a soaring bird to ground more promptly than this remark brought the Honorable Percival to his senses.

"Gad!" he cried, "but it's impossible! My luggage is all on board!"

He scrambled frantically out of the boat and rushed to his bath-house. The prospect of being stranded, on even a fairy island, with a dangerously beguiling maiden of the middle class was even more appalling than being divorced from his luggage. He struggled frantically into his clothes, losing three precious minutes over a broken shoe-lace. When he came out he found Bobby, very cool and collected, sipping an iced drink at the pavilion. Not waiting for her to finish, he rushed her into the waiting motor and implored the chauffeur to get them to the dock with all possible speed.

He was aghast at his own folly. It was incredible that he should have allowed himself to drift into such an awkward situation. They might not be missed until after the steamer sailed, in which case it was quite possible that the erratic captain would refuse to put back. The man might even make capital of the incident and claim that his daughter was compromised. What if he should demand satisfaction? What satisfaction would be due in the circumstances? Percival felt the hot blood rush to his head.

"Can't you speed her up a bit?" he urged, his elbows on the front seat and his eyes on the small watch encased in the leather strap about his wrist.

“Yes, do!” cried Bobby, excitedly. “I love to go fast!”

“Do you realize,” asked Percival, assuming his sternest manner in order to impress her with the gravity of the situation, “that we stand a very good chance of being left?”

“I can’t imagine a nicer place to be left in,” said Bobby, adding between bounces, “besides, you needn’t—look so cross—at me. It is all your—own fault.”

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The chauffeur at this point felt it incumbent upon him to avert a quarrel, so he offered the cheering assurance that it was only four forty-five, and he could get most anywhere in fifteen minutes. But even as he spoke there was an ominous report, followed by the unmistakable sound of escaping air.

"Oh, I say!" cried Percival in tones of horror, "not a puncture?"

"That's whut!" said the chauffeur, who had jammed on the brakes, and was now ruefully inspecting a back wheel.

"Can't stop for that!" cried Percival, impatiently. "Every second counts, my man. Doesn't matter how much we bounce so long as we get there."

"But I ain't goin' to ruin my tire."

"What the deuce do I care about your confounded old tire? I'll pay for it. I'll pay you anything you ask if you get me to the dock on time."

But after bumping furiously from cobblestone to cobblestone, the chauffeur rebelled and positively declined to go farther until the tire was changed.

"Then it's up to us to catch a streetcar!" cried Bobby, "What luck! Here comes one now. They only run once a week."

"Street-car? Oh, you mean a tram. To be sure! Hadn't thought of it. Shall we run for it?"

Thrusting a gold piece into the hand of the chauffeur, he made a fifty-yard dash for the corner that did credit to his early training. But the imperious signal with which he hailed the car was not heeded. Instead, a fat conductor leaned from the rear platform and obligingly volunteered the information that he was on the wrong corner.

"Intolerable insolence!" muttered Percival to Bobby, who had just come up. "What are you laughing at?"

"At your face when the car went by. Here comes a wagon. Quick! Ask the man if he can't take us the rest of the way."

"But we can't ride in a—"

"Yes, we can. We can ride on a broom-stick if we have to. Hurry!"

Percival plunged obediently into the street and made his request. He was meeting with little encouragement from the driver, who evidently thought he was mentally unsound, when Bobby came to his rescue. It was only by resorting to some of those feminine

tricks of persuasion which the suffragists assure us are quite immoral that she succeeded in carrying her point.

Ten minutes later the curiosity of the main thoroughfare of Honolulu was raised to fever-heat by the singular spectacle of an austere and distinguished-looking Englishman and a pretty, if somewhat disheveled, young girl dangling their feet from the end of a dilapidated wagon that was being driven at a breakneck speed toward the wharf.

[Illustration: At a breakneck speed towards the wharf]

For once in his life Percival was indifferent to appearances. Everything else sank into insignificance beside the one supreme necessity of catching that steamer. There would not be another sailing for the Orient for ten days. The prospect of ten days in this lotus-land alone with a perilously pretty girl who had evidently taken an enormous fancy to him filled him with alarm. What possible explanation could he offer to Sister Cordelia, that august representative of the family waiting in Hong-Kong to minister to his broken and bleeding heart?

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A violent lurch of the wagon caused him to grasp Bobby's arm to steady her, and as he did so she got a glimpse of his rueful countenance.

"Cheer up!" she cried. "There's no use looking like that even if we *are* left."

"Like what?"

"Like a trout on a hook."

He shot a glance at her. Was it possible that she had divined his state of mind? Woman's intuition was a thing of which he stood in deadly awe.

But they were arriving at the dock, and there was no time to indulge in subtleties. He sprang from the wagon before it came to a halt.

"The *Saluria!*" he demanded wildly of a man in uniform. "Has she sailed?"

"The *Saluria?*" repeated the man with maddening deliberation. "Let's see. Yellow funnels, ain't she? Yep, that's her a-going out of the harbor now."

## VI

### IN THE WIND-SHELTER

When Mrs. Western, anxiously watching the passengers come aboard from the last launch, had failed to see Bobby Boynton, she was partly reassured by young Vaughn, who was quite confident he had seen her on the dock. Not being satisfied, however, she made a tour of the crowded decks, looking into the music room, the writing-room and even the smoking-room, It was not until she went below and peeped into Bobby's empty cabin that she became seriously alarmed. Hurrying back on deck, she found, to her consternation, that the gang-planks had been lifted and the ship had weighed anchor. In great excitement she rushed to the bridge to find the captain, but he was not there. Five interminable minutes had been lost before she found him and stated her case.

The captain of an ocean-liner is too used to false alarms to be easily excited, and it was only after another thorough search was made, and no trace of Bobby and the Englishman found, that Captain Boynton concerned himself. Just what he said need not be chronicled. It was extremely crude and extremely personal, and punctuated by phrases that would have shocked the delicate sensibilities of the Honorable Percival.

His humor was not improved by the dictatorial messages that began to arrive by wireless:

Have chartered launch. Hold steamer,

HASCOMBE.

Distance too great for launch. Meet us halfway.

HASCOMBE.

Have started, Meet us.

HASCOMBE.

The exciting news that somebody was left soon traveled from deck to deck, and when the steamer began slowly and laboriously to come about, the railing's were crowded with passengers. Presently a small dark object was visible in the distance, rising and falling unsteadily on the waves that lay between the steamer and the dim shore-line. Gradually the launch came nearer, and with some difficulty succeeded in getting alongside.

A cheer of welcome went up as Bobby and Percival scrambled up the ship's-ladder. Their hats were adorned with trailing wreaths of smilax, and about their shoulders were garlands of carnations. It was a stage entrance, sufficiently conspicuous and effective to have satisfied the soul of the most exacting manager.



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Percival's abhorrence of publicity, which had been overshadowed by his anxiety, now took complete possession of him. With punctilious formality he handed Bobby on deck, then, with a manner sufficiently forbidding to discourage all questions and remarks, pushed his way haughtily through the laughing crowd and went below.

It was not until he entered his state-room that he recalled the grievance that ostensibly had sent him ashore. In the middle of his berth was an open suitcase, with its contents widely distributed. Three pairs of shoes lay in the middle of the floor, a bunch of variegated neckties depended from the door-knob, and a stack of American magazines and newspapers lay upon the sofa, Percival stood on the threshold sniffing. There was no mistaking the odor. It was white rose, a perfume forever associated with the perfidious Lady Hortense! Was he to suffer this refinement of cruelty in having the very air he breathed saturated with her memory? He rang furiously for his valet.

"Judson, see that that person's things are put upon his side of the room and kept there, and under no condition allow the port-holes to be closed."

"Very good, sir. Will you dress now for dinner!"

But Percival was in no mood for the long table d'hote dinner, with its inevitable comments upon the affair of the afternoon. He preferred a sandwich and a glass of wine in a secluded corner of the smoking-room, after which he played a few games of solitaire, then betook himself to bed. His sleep was not a restful one, being haunted by departing steamers, arriving Chinamen, and an endless procession of scornful Lady Hortenses.

He was awakened the next morning long before his accustomed time by some one stirring noisily about the state-room. After lying in indignant silence for a while behind his drawn curtains, he touched the electric bell. When Judson's respectful knock responded, he said in tones of icy formality:

"Judson, tell the steward to draw my tub."

"I say," broke in a voice on the outer side of the curtain, "while you are drawing things, I wish you'd try your hand at this cork."

There was a brief parley at the door, and a "Very good, sir," from Judson.

Percival's anger rose. It was bad enough to share his room with a stranger, but to share his valet as well was out of the question. When a second tap announced that his bath was ready, he slipped a long robe over his silk pajamas and emerged imperiously from his berth. It is not easy to maintain a haughty dignity in a bath-robe, with one's hair on end, but Percival came very near it.

The effort was wasted, however, for a cheerful “Good morning, Partner,” greeted him, and his cold eye discerned not a slant-eyed Oriental, but a round, pink American face, partly covered with lather, beaming upon him.

“My name is Black,” continued the new-comer—“Andy Black. And yours?”

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"Hascombe," said Percival, haughtily aware of all that that name stood for in the annals of southern England.

"Oh, you're the fellow that got left! Any kin to the Texas Hascombes?" asked the youth, drawing the razor over his upper lip as if there were real work for it to do.

"None whatever," said Percival. "I'll trouble you for my sponge-bag."

When Percival got down to breakfast he found that the enforced proximity of Mr. Andy Black was not to be confined to the state-room. The plump, red-headed young man, with the complexion of a baby and a smile that impartially embraced the universe, was seated at his elbow.

"Who is the girl at the captain's right?" he demanded eagerly as Percival took his seat.

"His daughter," Percival said curtly, painfully aware of the amused glances that had followed his entrance.

"Some looker!" said Andy. "I see my finish right now."

The sight of it eventually pleased him, for he turned his back upon Percival, and became hilariously appreciative of the captain's jokes, even contributing one or two of his own. Before the meal was over he had informed the whole table that he was on his way to Hong-Kong in the interests of the Union Tobacco Company, that he had done business in every State in the Union, and that he had crossed the Pacific five times.

During the course of the day Percival visited the purser at regular intervals, demanding that his room-mate be removed. But the purser was a sturdy Hamburger, and the very sight of a monocle affected his disposition. Meanwhile Mr. Andy Black had made good use of his time. At the end of twenty-four hours he had spoken to virtually everybody on board, including the gray-haired old missionary who passed cream-peppermints about the deck at a quarter to ten every morning. He had played quoits with Elise Weston, punched the bag with the college boys, and taught Bobby Boynton to dance the tango. So obnoxious was the sight of him to the Honorable Percival that he turned his chair to the wall and buried himself in "Guillim's Display of Heraldry." He considered it as a personal affront on the part of Fate that just as he was beginning to find the voyage endurable this prancing young montebank should appear to spoil everything.

For the next two days he sternly avoided Bobby Boynton. His somewhat pompous letter of apology to the captain, in which he set forth at length the various unforeseen accidents that had caused him to miss the steamer, was curtly and ungraciously received, and strained relations ensued. Moreover, as he viewed the recent adventure in retrospect, he decided that he had been most negligent in observing those rules by which the conduct of an English gentleman should be regulated. In condescending to

be amused he had gone too far, and it was now incumbent upon him to nip in the bud any gossip that might have risen concerning his attentions to the daughter of that odious captain.

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Bobby survived the withdrawal of his favor with amazing indifference. What puzzled and annoyed him beyond measure was that the more oblivious of him she seemed, the more acutely aware of her he became. Twenty times a day he assured himself that it made no earthly difference to him whether she was playing quoits with the Scotchman or bean-bag with Andy Black, and yet not a page of his book would become intelligible until he made a round of the deck to find out what she was doing. The evenings were even worse: midnight often found him wrapped in his rug in his steamer-chair or morosely pacing the deck, waiting for some festivity in which Bobby was engaged to come to an end. The shocking lack of chaperonage and the liberty allowed young girls in the States served as themes for more than one bitter letter home.

But his cold aloofness was not destined to last. One morning when most of the passengers were concerned with the appearance of Bird Island on the horizon, he stumbled quite by accident upon Bobby curled up behind a wind-shelter on the other side of the deck, contributing some large salt tears to the brine of the ocean. Now, in that circle of society in which it had pleased Providence to place Percival it was considered the height of bad form to exhibit an emotion. His imagination could not picture one of the ladies of Hascombe Hall sitting in a public place with her hair tumbled over her face, and her shoulders shaking with sobs.

Nevertheless, the sight of this hitherto buoyant young creature in distress moved him to sit down beside her, and in the softly modulated tones upon which we have already commented coax her to tell him what was the matter.

Unlike the historic Miss Muffet who repulsed a similar attention from the spider, she welcomed his arrival. She even asked him if he had an extra handkerchief, her own having been reduced to a wet little ball. He had. He not only proffered it, but helped to wipe away the tears.

[Illustration: "I don't know what makes me so everlastingly silly!" she said fiercely trying to swallow the rising sobs, "but he won't understand!"]

"I don't know what makes me so everlastingly silly," she said fiercely, trying to swallow the rising sobs, "but he *won't* understand!"

"Who won't?"

"The captain. I don't care if he is my father. Sometimes I don't like him a bit."

Neither did Percival. It was strange how the common antagonism drew them together. He was about to ask for further details when the old Peppermint Lady scurried past and, seeing them, turned back to impart the burning news that Bird Island was in sight.

"Yes," said Percival, shamelessly, "we have seen it."

“He doesn’t know me if he thinks I’ll give in,” went on Bobby where she had left off. “I am just as stubborn as he is.”

“There, now, I shouldn’t talk about it if it made me cry,” advised Percival, patting her shoulder.

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"But I've got to talk to somebody," she said almost savagely. "What did he give me to the Fords for if he didn't think they were good enough? Pa Joe's as good as he is any day in the week."

"Who is Pa Joe?" asked Percival, groping in the dark.

"He's the darlindest old man in the world, and he owns the best cattle ranch in Wyoming. Anybody'll tell you so. He's been a real father to me, and the boys are real brothers—at least three of them are. They are just as good as anybody that ever lived, I don't care what the captain says."

There was another passionate burst of tears, and Percival had just succeeded in stemming the tide when the Scotchman bore down upon them.

"I beg your pardon, but did you know we were passing Bird Island?" he asked them.

"Yes," said Percival, hastily getting up and piloting him safely past. "As a matter of fact, some one was just asking for you in the smoking-room."

"I told the captain," sobbed Bobby, beating her hands together and apparently oblivious of interruptions, "that I'd come on this trip with him, but that it wouldn't make a bit of difference, and it hasn't."

"No, of course it hasn't," agreed Percival, soothingly, not in the least comprehending the drift of her remarks, but pleasantly aware that he was being confided in and that something very limp and lovely was under his protection.

"Isn't there a—a—Mrs. Ford on the ranch?" he asked by way of prolonging the interview.

"Not now. Dear Aunt Kitty died four years ago. That was when they sent me in to Cheyenne to school. But I'm finished now, and I'm going to stay on the ranch and take care of Pa Joe and the boys."

"Can't say it sounds exciting. How many children are there?"

"Children! Why, they are all as tall as you are, except Piffles. There's Ted, and Dick, and Piffles, and—Hal. I guess you saw Hal that day at the station."

For the first time since he had known her, her black lashes drooped consciously over her blue eyes. They were very long and thick lashes, and as they swept her flushed cheek, Percival not only forgot what she was saying, but went so far as to forget himself.

"I saw only one thing that day at the station," he said, with such an ardent look that it made Bobby smile through her tears. As a rule he disliked dimples, especially the stationary kind. But the one that now occupied, his attention was a very shy and elusive affair that kept the beholder watching very closely for fear he should miss it.

"Come," he said, taking advantage of the momentary sunshine, "you are a bit of a sportsman, you know. You mustn't come off by yourself and cry like this. Makes you feel so beastly seedy afterward, doesn't it?"

"Yes. But you don't understand. I want to do something that the captain's perfectly determined I sha'n't do. He didn't bring me on this trip just to give me a good time. Not on your life! He brought me to make me forget."



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"Oh, that's the game, is it? Scuttling you off to sea to make you forget. Deuced interesting! I don't mind telling you I'm in something of the same sort of a hole myself."

"Really?" Her interest was roused instantly.

A mysterious change was taking place in their acquaintance. Bobby's tears had in some unaccountable manner taken all the starch out of Percival's manner.

"You mean," she went on, "that they are sending you off to keep you from marrying some one they don't like?"

"Not exactly. I shouldn't put up with that for a moment, you know."

"Of course you wouldn't, because you are a man. But suppose you were a girl, and your father was perfectly unreasonable. What would you do then?"

"I'd drop the matter for a bit," advised Percival, at a venture. "Let him think you didn't care a tuppenny. Pretend to be awfully keen about something else, and, likely as not, he'll come round. Not a bad idea that, by Jove! I've tried it."

"Do you think it would work?" asked Bobby, scanning his finely chiseled profile as eagerly as if she were consulting the Delphic oracle.

"No harm in trying. Keep him on tenter-hooks, at any rate."

"Ship ahoy!" came in joyous tones from Andy Black as he rounded the corner of the saloon, clinging to his cap. "Been looking for you all over. Say, did you all know we were passing Bird Island?"

"If we don't," said Percival, with his most deliberate stare, "it is not because we have failed to be informed of the uninteresting fact every five minutes for the last half-hour."

"Consider me the third stanza," said Andy; "please omit me!"

Bobby laughed as he disappeared, and pushed back her tumbled hair.

"I love to hear you say 'hawf,'" she said; then she added impetuously, "You aren't a bit like anybody I ever saw before."

"I dare say," said Percival, returning her smile.

"Not only your talk, but your walk, and the way you wear your clothes."

"I suppose my tailor does rather understand my figure," said Percival; "but what puzzles you about my speech?"

"I don't know. It's different. And then I never can tell what you are thinking about."

"Do you wish to know what I'm thinking about just now?"

"Yes."

"I am wondering why you wear high-heeled, gold-beaded slippers in the morning."

Bobby thrust forth two dainty feet and contemplated them in surprise.

"What's wrong with them?" she asked.

"Rather dressy for the morning, aren't they?" he gently suggested.

"I don't know," she said good-humoredly. "I've got a trunkful of clothes down in my state-room, but I never know which ones to put on. You see, we never dike up like this on the ranch. When the captain brought me to San Francisco, he handed me over to a woman at the hotel and told her to rig me out for the trip."

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"Did—did she buy your steamer-coat?" asked Percival.

Bobby's laugh rang out contagiously.

"Isn't it a tulip? I knew it was wrong the minute I came on board and saw Elise Weston's. Honest, now, have I got anything else as bad as that?"

"No, oh, no; I was a beastly cad to mention it. You are most awfully charming in anything you choose to wear. But as a matter of fact, I do like you best in white, with your hair low, as it is now."

"Hair low, shoes high, all in white. Anything else you'd like?" All trace of tears had vanished, and her eyes were dancing audaciously.

"Yes," said Percival, leaning forward, "there is."

At this critical juncture a well-built figure in a uniform started down the stairway above them, paused a moment unobserved, then quietly retraced his steps to the bridge.

"See here, I must be going," said Bobby, rising abruptly. "I promised to practise for the tableaux at ten, and it's half-past now. Say, you were a brick to brace me up! I'm going to take your advice, too; you see if I don't. May I count on your help!"

"At your service," said Percival, rising, and clasping the hand she held out.

The captain's Chinese boy glided up unobserved and stood at attention.

"Captain say missy please come top-side right away. Wantchee see Bird Island."

Percival, still holding her hand, smilingly shook his head.

"Damn Bird Island!" he murmured softly.

## VII

### THE DAY THAT NEVER WAS

Of all the places in the world where a flirtation can germinate, blossom, and bear fruit overnight, an ocean-liner is the most propitious. Two conventional human beings who in the city streets would pass each other with utter indifference will often drop a conscious lid over a welcoming eye when passing and repassing on the deck of a steamer. When men and women are set adrift for four weeks, with thousands of miles of sparkling water separating them from the past and the present, and with nothing to do but observe one another, something usually happens.

The present voyage of the *Saluria* was no exception; in fact, it threatened to break all former records. The love-epidemic started in the steerage, where a Dutch boy en route to Java developed a burning attachment for a young stewardess, and it extended to the bridge, where Captain Boynton frequently consigned his duties to the first officer in order to devote his energies to holding Mrs. Weston's worsted. When he was not holding the skein, he was holding the ball, and during the endless process of winding and unwinding he spun his own yarns, recalling tales of wild adventure that alternately shocked and fascinated his gentle listener.

The young people, meanwhile, were not by any means immune. Elise Weston had discovered that the Scotchman's voice blended perfectly with her own, and through endless practising of "Tales from Hoffman" they had arrived at a harmony that promised to be permanent. Andy Black and Bobby Boynton romped through the days, apparently wasting little time on sentiment, but developing a friendship that might at any time become serious.

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Only the blighted being wandered the decks alone. Since that morning in the wind-shelter he had decided to take no more risks. Alarming symptoms had not been wanting to indicate the return of a malady from which he never expected to suffer again. The grand affair with the Lady Hortense had been a dignified, chronic ailment which he had learned to endure with a becoming air of pensive resignation. The present attack threatened to be of a much more disturbing character. It was acute; it responded to no treatment, mental, moral, or physical. It was like toothache or mumps or chicken-pox, an ignoble, complaint of which one is ashamed, but before which one is helpless.

It was only at table that he found it impossible to maintain toward Bobby that attitude of indifference which he had prescribed for himself. With the arrival of the new passengers at Honolulu the places had been slightly changed, and now that he found himself seated between Bobby and Andy Black, the temptation to turn his chair slightly toward the former, thus presenting an insolent and forbidding back to Andy, was more than he could resist. Moreover, it afforded him unlimited satisfaction to know that by the glance of his eye or a whispered half-phrase he could instantly center all her sparkling attention upon himself.

The captain viewed these elusive tete-a-tetes with growing disfavor. One morning when he was alone at breakfast with Mrs. Weston he unburdened his mind after his own peculiar fashion.

"A seaman has to cultivate three things, my lady, a Nelson eye, a Nelson ear, and a Nelson nose. I've got 'em all."

Mrs. Weston smiled with, flattering expectancy.

"I don't claim to know what's going on in the rest of the world," he continued significantly, "but you can back your Uncle Ik to know everything that's happening on board this wagon."

"What's happening now? Do tell me," said Mrs. Weston, leaning forward and almost upsetting the salt in her eagerness.

"An Englishman, a poisonously funny Englishman, is running out of his course. He'll hit a reef before long that will knock a hole in his hull."

"Oh, you mean the Honorable Percival?"

"I do. And if he's like the majority of those titled Johnnies, he's so crooked he can hide behind a corkscrew."

"O Captain, that's absurd! Why, he is one of the most absolutely irreproachable and unapproachable young aristocrats I ever saw."



"That's all right. I don't tie up to the British aristocracy, nor any other foreign nobility. Besides, what headway will I make by steering that girl of mine off one shoal to land her on another?"

"Was the Wyoming affair quite out of the question?"

"Oh, Hal Ford is a good-enough chap, but he's a perfect kid. They are both too young to know what they want. Besides, I am not going to have her drop anchor on a ranch for the rest of her days. I'll send her up to 'Frisco to school first. That's what the row was about before she left home. The little minx defied me, so I picked her up and brought her with me out to Hong-Kong."

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"Poor child! She probably sees now that you were quite right."

"Maybe she does and maybe she doesn't. She's a wily little scamp all right. I discovered that the second day out. I'd forbidden her to write any letters to the ranch, so she was keeping a log-book which she was going to mail at every port."

"And were you hard-hearted enough to confiscate it?"

"I was. At least I ordered her to give it to me on the spot, and she said she'd chuck it overboard first."

"And did she!"

"She did," said the captain, with a grim chuckle.

"You don't understand that girl," said Mrs. Weston. "I'm quite sure she'd be amenable if she were handled right. However, she doesn't seem to be breaking her heart. Between Andy and the Honorable she's finding consolation."

"Most women do," said the captain, with one of those flashes of bitterness that sent all the good humor scurrying out of his face.

"Of course, she's just playing with Andy," Mrs. Weston hurried on, fearful of the memories she had stirred; "but Mr. Hascombe is different. He is so good-looking and so polished, almost any girl would have her head turned a bit by his attentions."

"You don't mean to say that you think Bobby—"

"I can't quite make out. She doesn't seem to see much of him on deck, but at the table she hasn't eyes or ears for any one else. You watch her."

"Trust my Nelson eye!" said the captain.

When Antipodal Day arrived, every one felt called upon to celebrate it. The guileless tried to see the imaginary line of the meridian which the sophisticated pointed out to them on the water; the cream-peppermint lady went so far as to say she felt the jar as the steamer passed over it. Conjectures, witty, mathematical, or inane, were made as to the identity of to-day, if yesterday was Friday and to-morrow going to be Saturday.

During the morning Percival wandered disconsolately from one part of the ship to another. Despite the fact that he was quite determined to keep away from Bobby, he chafed under her seeming indifference. After that intimate hour together in the wind-shelter it was strange that she could be so oblivious of his presence. It was distasteful to him to have to signal the train of her attention. To be sure, a very little signal served, —a word, a look, a thoughtful gesture,—but he preferred a homage that required no

prompting. Moreover, she was guilty of “smiling on all she looked upon,” and her acceptance of Andy Black into the ever-widening circle of her admirers offended him deeply.

The day dragged interminably. By five o’clock in the afternoon a tango-tea was in progress, and it seemed to Percival that everybody on board was dancing except the missionaries and himself. Even they were taking part as spectators, having secured their places half an hour before the appointed time in order not to miss a moment of the shocking exhibition.



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Percival went to the upper deck and sought the most secluded corner he could find, but even there he was haunted by the soul-disturbing music. Dancing was one of his accomplishments, and he had trod stately measures through half a dozen London seasons, the admiration and the despair of more than one aspiring mama. He looked with great disapproval upon these new and boisterous American dances, he wondered if they were as difficult as they looked. Seeing nobody about, he rose and tentatively tried a few steps behind the shelter of a life-boat. He found it interesting, and was getting quite pleased over his cleverness in catching the syncopated time, when he spied an impertinent sailor grinning at him from the rigging. Instantly his legs became rigid, and he affected an interest in the horizon intended to convince the sailor that he had been the victim of an optical illusion. Of course it was quite beneath his dignity to take part in these rollicking dances, especially in such a public place as on shipboard. He realized that fully; yet he thought of Bobby and sighed. There were actually times in his life when he almost wished he had been born in the middle class.

Then he drew himself up sharply. If there was one thing incumbent upon the second son of the late Lord Westenhanger, it was that he maintain his position. Though grievously disappointed in his failure to capture the incomparable Lady Hortense, he must don his armor and ride forth again to find another lady, differing in kind, perhaps, but not in degree. In his scheme of things wild young daughters of American sea-captains had no place whatever.

Yet even as he made this assertion he found himself moving toward the companionway and down to the deck below.

"Will you sit out the next dance with me?" he heard himself murmuring to Bobby over her partner's shoulder.

"You bet I will," said Bobby with a smile that made him forget the awfulness of her language.

Ten minutes later they were leaning over the rail on the deserted boat-deck, the wind full in their faces, watching the prow of the steamer gently rise and fall as she sailed straight into the golden heart of the sun. Up from the horizon spread wave after wave; of perilous color, emerald melting into azure, crimson dying into rose. There was just enough breeze to put a tiny feather on the windward slope of the waves, and every white crest caught the glory.

"This is better than all the tangoing in the world," cried Bobby. "Have you been up here all afternoon?"

"I have. You see, all those people below get rather on one's nerves."

"Do I?" she challenged him instantly.

“Not on one’s nerves exactly,” he said, thrillingly aware that her arm was touching his on the railing and that the dangerous pink light was playing over her face; “but I must say you do get on one’s—one’s mind!”

She laughed gaily.

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"Well, that's next to having nothing on your mind. Say, you wouldn't think I had the blues, would you?"

"Can't say I should."

"Well, I have. I've been so homesick all day that I could go round the corner and cry if you—if you hadn't said I mustn't."

"What are you homesick for?"

"Oh, for the old ranch and the ponies and my dogs and—and lots of things. See the way the wind flecks the water over there? Well, that's just the way it does the grasslands back home."

"But it's such a parched, barren sort of a place, Wyoming."

"It is *not*. You ought to see it in the early spring, when everything is vivid green, and the cactus is in bloom—the red-flowered kind that looks so pretty against the sides of the gray buttes. Why, you can gallop for miles with your horse's hoofs sinking into beds of prairie roses!"

"But it's virtually green in England all the year round. I'd like to show you a well-run English estate. Rather a pretty sight. Hascombe Hall's a fairly decent example. Some hundreds of acres, don't you know."

"Some hundreds!" repeated Bobby, scornfully. "Our ranch covers two hundred thousand acres, and it takes Pa Joe four days' hard riding to get over it!"

"Oh, I say, most extraordinary! But if I were you, I wouldn't think about home affairs," said Percival, to whom her background in Wyoming was of no consequence. He liked to think of her as having begun to live when she met him, and as gracefully ceasing to exist when they parted.

"All right," said Bobby, resignedly. "I've kept bottled up this long; I suppose I can manage the rest of the time. What's that book you've been reading?"

"Shelley."

"Is it a love-story?"

Percival winced.

"It is poetry," he said. "I shouldn't mind reading you a bit, if you like."

She did like. She evidently liked tremendously. She listened as an inquisitive bird might listen to a strange wood note, with her head on one side and her bright eyes intent upon his face.

When Percival's perfectly modulated voice ceased, she sighed:

"I didn't understand a word of it," she said, "but I could listen to you read forever. It makes me think of the wind in the trees, and all the lovely things that ever happened to me."

"But don't you like the poem?"

[Illustration: "I like the way your mouth looks when you read it."]

"I like the way your mouth looks when you read it. Your chin's nice, too, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Percival, with an unsuccessful effort at indifference; "it's the Hascombe chin. Been in the family for generations."

"Think of having a chin as old as that! Perhaps that's what makes you so solemn."

"Am I solemn?"

"Awfully. Elise Weston says she believes you have been crossed in love."

The hollow chambers of Percival's heart reverberated with alarming echoes. He shot a suspicious glance at Bobby, but her innocent gaze reassured him.

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"I am afraid your friend Miss Weston is romantic," he said stiffly. "Am I keeping you too long from the dance?"

"Oh, no," said Bobby, comfortably. "I've got the next with Andy Black. He'll never think to look up here. But are you quite sure I'm not getting on your nerves?"

"I am quite sure you are a most awfully charming girl," Percival exclaimed with sudden warmth. "As a matter of fact, I—I like you tremendously."

"That's nice," said Bobby, "because, you see, I like you!"

There was no reason why her avowal should have been regarded as more serious than his own. But he took alarm instantly.

"You won't mind my telling you a few things for your own good, will you?" he asked, taking refuge in the safe role of mentor.

"Not a bit," said Bobby; "fire away."

She listened for five minutes to his dissertation on the impropriety of young ladies playing poker in the smoking-room, then she became restive.

"Isn't it funny," she said by way of changing the subject, "that yesterday was Friday, and to-morrow is going to be Saturday, and to-day isn't anything?"

"But it *is* something. It's a day I shall remember."

Percival was drifting again, and he knew it, but there was that in the bewitching face upturned to his that demoralized him.

"No," said Bobby, "it's the day that never was. We just picked it up out of the sea, and we are going to drop it back again. Whatever happens to-day doesn't count."

"Why?"

"Because by to-morrow, you see, to-day never will have been."

"Deuced clever idea that, I call it. Never thought of it. Suppose we celebrate by way of doing something that we wouldn't do if it counted."

Bobby clapped her hands. "What shall it be?"

"Well, suppose for the rest of the day you consider me the person you quite like best in the world."

She considered it.

“All right. I don’t mind for the rest of the day. And you promise to forget all those girls over in England, and pretend that I am the nicest girl you know?”

“I promise,” said Percival.

When the second gong for dinner sounded, the two white-clad figures were still leaning on the railing in the secluded angle made by two life-boats. The color had gone from the sky, but every moment the purpling waters were growing more vivid, more intense, more thrillingly alive to the mystery of the coming night. The Honorable Percival’s cap was on Bobby’s head, and his coat was about her shoulders. As to himself, he seemed strangely indifferent to the tumbled state of his wind-blown hair and the shocking informality of his shirt-sleeves. It was quite evident that for the time being, at least, he had thrown discretion to the winds, and was sailing away from his memories at the rate of sixteen knots an hour.

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That night at dinner the captain followed Mrs. Weston's advice and took soundings. Nothing was lost upon him, from Bobby's late arrival in a somewhat sophisticated white evening gown that she had hitherto scorned, to the new and becoming way in which her hair was arranged. It did not require a Nelson eye to discover a suppressed excitement under her high spirits or to detect the side-play that was taking place between her and the apparently stolid Englishman at her right.

Captain Boynton looked at Mrs. Weston and raised one eyebrow; she nodded comprehendingly. Later in the evening, when he dropped into a steamer-chair beside her, he asked if she had seen Bobby.

"Not since dinner. All the young people have been asking for her. Did you look in the writing-room?"

"I've looked everywhere except in the coal-bunkers," said the captain, gruffly. "Talk to me about responsibility. I'd rather run a schooner up the Hoogli than to steer that girl of mine."

"You've wakened to your duty rather late, haven't you!" asked Mrs. Weston. "I suppose it's the Englishman who is making you anxious?"

The captain dropped his voice.

"Did you see the way she looked at him at dinner? By George! it was enough to melt the leg off an iron pot!"

"It's been coming for a week," said Mrs. Weston, wisely. "If you really oppose it, there is no time to be lost."

"Oppose it? Of course I oppose it. What's to be done?"

"The situation requires delicate handling. Would you like me to try and help you out—share the responsibility of chaperoning her, I mean?"

"Permanently?" asked the captain, shooting a quizzical glance at her from under his heavy brows.

"You wretch!" said Mrs. Weston, flushing. "Just to Hong-Kong, I mean."

That night about ten o'clock the captain, who happened to be crossing the steerage deck, came quite unexpectedly upon Percival and Bobby groping their way through the dark.

[Illustration: "Roberta!" he called sternly. "What are you doing out here?"]

“Roberta,” he called sternly, “What are you doing out here?”

“Oh,” cried Bobby, breathlessly, feeling her way around the hatch, “we’ve been out on the prow for hours, and it was simply gorgeous. All inky black except the phosphorescence, miles and miles of it! And some dolphins, all covered with silver, kept racing with us and leaping clear out of the water, like wriggly bits of fire. And the stars—why, Mr. Hascombe’s been telling me the most fascinating things I ever heard about stars. We’ve had a perfectly wonderful time, haven’t we, Mr. Hascombe?”

“Topping!” said the Honorable Percival.

## **VIII**

### **IN THE CROW’S-NEST**

The sea-voyage of thirty days, which in the beginning had threatened to stretch into eternity, now seemed to be racing into the past with a swiftness that was incredible. To Percival the one desirable thing in life had come to be the sailing of the high seas under favoring winds, in a big ship, with Bobby Boynton on board, and a conscience that had agreed to remain quiescent until port was reached.



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Not that Percival's conscience succumbed without a struggle; he had to assure it repeatedly that he would refrain from rousing in Bobby any hopes that might be realized. The moment she showed the slightest sign of taking his attentions seriously he would kindly, but firmly, make her understand. It would not be the first time he had had to do this. He recalled several instances with sad complacency. But a man cannot always be sacrificing himself. A mild flirtation, with a girl whom he never expected to see again was surely a harmless way of consoling himself for the harsh treatment he had recently received from another of her sex.

The one fly in his amber these days was Andy Black; only Andy was not a fixed object. His activities were endless, and, strangely enough, they exerted a powerful influence on Percival, causing him to change his entire mode of life from his hour of getting up to his hour of retiring. In order to get half an hour's conversation with Bobby Boynton it was necessary to outwit Andy, and he was devoting himself assiduously to the task.

What complicated the matter was that Andy had embraced him in his general affection for humanity, and despite persistent snubbing continued to treat him as the friend of his bosom. Percival could hate him contemptuously when he was out of sight, but he found it difficult to keep up the dislike when the fat, boyish fellow sat on the sofa opposite his berth and poured out his innermost confidences.

"You see," he would say plaintively as he reached for Percival's silver shoe-horn, "I never slide into love, like most fellows. I always splash right in, head first. That's what I did the first night I came on board, and I haven't come up yet. When I do, she'll hit me in the head. She won't have me; you see if she does."

Of course Percival agreed with him, but in the meanwhile he wondered what Bobby could find in him to afford her such constant amusement.

One sparkling morning when the white caps were dancing on the blue water, and every bit of loose canvas was spanking the wind for joy, Bobby announced that she was going again to the crow's-nest. She had circled the deck some ten times between her two cavaliers, and the difficulty of keeping mental step with either in the presence of the other may have influenced her sudden decision.

"What do you want to do that for?" said Andy, whose weight made him cautious. "It's a mean climb, and there's nothing to see when you get up there."

"There's everything to see," said Bobby and she looked at Percival.

Ten days ago nothing could have induced him to do such an unconventional and conspicuous thing. He remembered the exact phrase he had applied to it when told by the Scotchman of Bobby's previous adventure. "Characteristically American," he had remarked, with a disparaging shrug.

Now, with assumed languor, he said, “I don’t mind going with you.”

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Two sailors were found to tie the ropes around their waists and stand guard below while they slowly and cautiously climbed from one swaying rung to another.

"All right?" asked Bobby, looking down over her shoulder.

"Right as rain," called Percival, with suggestion of eagerness in his voice.

He followed her cautiously as she scrambled like a squirrel from the top of the ladder to the crow's-nest. Swinging through the clear sky one hundred feet above the water below, they found themselves in the sudden intimacy of a vast and magnificent solitude. The sapphire sky met the sapphire sea in a sharply defined, unbroken line around them, while shimmers of palpitating light rose from the sparkling waters until they lost themselves in the zenith above.

"Oh, look! look!" cried Bobby, with an eager hand on Percival's arm. Turning, he saw the water suddenly disturbed by hundreds of curved bodies that glistened in the sunlight as they leaped together in a perfect riot of joy.

"Silly old fish, the porpoise," he said, "always making circles in the water like that"

But the ennui expressed in his words was not reflected in his face. Even silly old porpoises acquire an interest when one's attention is called to them by a small and shapely hand that forgets in the enthusiasm of the moment to remove itself from one's arm. It was only by sharply calling to mind the haughty faces of his mother and sisters that he refrained from indiscretion.

"You don't mind?" he asked, drawing his cigar-case from his pocket. "Deuced clever of you, I call it, to think of coming up here. How did you know that Black fellow wouldn't come?"

"He's too fat to climb," said Bobby. "He doesn't even like to walk."

"Thought he was quite keen about it from the way he walked with us every evening. A decent chap would not intrude."

"That's funny!" said Bobby, with twinkling eyes. "That's almost exactly what he said about you, only he didn't say intrude."

"What did he say?"

"Butt in," said Bobby.

The Honorable Percival suffered one of those acute revulsions that had become less frequent of late. At such times he marveled at himself for permitting such vulgarity in his presence.

“You Americans have the most extraordinary expressions, Miss Boynton!” he said.

“How queer that sounds!”

“What?”

“Miss Boynton. I thought you’d got to the Bobby stage. Perhaps you’d rather make it Roberta.”

“Yes, I think I should, if I may.”

For a few seconds they dropped into silence, he puffing away at his cigar, and she gazing off to the horizon as if she had quite forgotten his presence.

“Were you ever in love?” she asked, turning on him suddenly.

“Why do you ask?” he said, scrutinizing the ash of his cigar.

“Because it’s so queer you never got married. I thought young Englishmen with names and estates to keep up always married right away.”

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"Well, I suppose they do, as a rule. The Hascombes are rather different. Of course there have been a lot of girls who were foolish enough to—er—to think—"

"To think they were in love with you? Go ahead! I'll shut my eyes."

Instead, she opened them very wide, and he had to unbutton his coat just for the sake of buttoning it up again.

"But I don't care about them," she went on; "I want to know if *you've* ever been in love."

"Imagined I was once."

"Oh, what fun! Tell me about it from beginning to end!"

"How do you know it had an end!"

"I'd gamble on it," said Bobby, confidently. "But tell me!"

Just why Percival at this moment felt a sudden desire to discuss a subject that hitherto he had shrunk from the slightest reference to can be explained only by the fact that the confiding of an unhappy love affair to a sympathetic member of the opposite sex seems a necessary stage of convalescence. It was the first chance he had had to present his version of the story to an unbiased listener, and if he omitted certain details, and laid undue stress upon others, it must not be held against him.

"Of course," he said in conclusion, "through a sense of honor I'd have gone through with it. Fortunately, it was not necessary. Poor girl broke it off herself."

He spoke as of one who had committed suicide, but in regard to whom a kindly jury would have brought in a verdict of temporary insanity.

"Well, I think you were perfectly splendid, all through," cried Bobby. "What sort of a girl could she have been to act like that?"

He took several long, satisfying pulls at his cigar; it was astonishing how much he was enjoying it, and the conversation as well.

"Oh, she's quite one of the best, you know. Dare say she thought it was all my fault."

"The idea! Was she pretty?"

"Opinions differ."

"Smart?"

"Rather!"

“Jolly?”

“Well, no, not exactly jolly; that’s not quite the word.”

“Very proper, I suppose,”

“Oh, yes, absolutely; most decidedly so. Perfect stickler for form.”

Bobby sighed.

“Just the opposite from me all the way through. Well, I’m glad you wouldn’t make up. Serves her right.”

“Probably best for everybody,” said Percival. “Now it’s your turn. How about yourself!”

“Well,” she said with what struck him as the strangest irrelevance, “our scheme seems to be working with the captain. We’ve got him guessing. He told me last night I was not to go to the prow with you again.”

“Why not?”

“He thinks you like me too much.”

“What do *you* think?”

Percival bit his lip the moment he had asked it, but leaning there on the railing, with her dancing eyes on a level with his own, and nothing else on the entire horizon, it was difficult to keep the situation in hand.

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"I think you are getting a bully tan," she said, scrutinizing him closely; "most men get a red nose or else they get all speckled around the edges. Yours looks like a nice crust on an apple pie."

"I do tan rather decently," he said; "but you haven't told me what you think."

"What about?"

"About my liking you too much."

"I think the captain exaggerated."

"He couldn't exaggerate that."

"But how can you like me when I'm all wrong?"

"I like you because of your possibilities. You've probably never met any one before who understood you as I do. Quite extraordinary the way you've improved since you came on board."

"And you've got fourteen days more to work on me! Do you think anybody will recognize me when I get back to Wyoming?"

"Now you are chaffing!" complained Percival. "You never take me seriously."

"Then you want me to be serious, and believe everything you say?"

He paused in awed contemplation of the direful consequences if she should, but for the life of him he couldn't stop.

"I want you to believe me," he said tenderly, "when I say that you've been most awfully sweet, and that I wouldn't give half a sovereign for any other girl's chances if you were within ten miles. I want you to know that I consider you the prettiest girl I've ever seen, and the most—"

Bobby tightened the rope about her waist.

"It's time for me to be going," she exclaimed in mock alarm, "If you keep on saying things like that, I may furnish another scalp to that collection you were telling me about. I don't dare stay another minute."

Neither did Percival. He followed her down the ladder as if he had been escaping from quicksands.

That night the crow's-nest was added to the prow on the list of places about a ship which the captain felt young ladies should stay away from.

[Illustration: "You will have to join the crowd," suggested Bobby when Percival complained of not seeing her as often as he wished]

"You will have to join the crowd," suggested Bobby when Percival complained of not seeing her as often as he wished. "We sing up on the boat-deck every night, and now the moon is up, it's perfectly gorgeous."

But Percival's abhorrence of crowds made him hold out resolutely until the day before they were to land in Japan. Everybody was making plans for the few days to be spent in port, and small parties were being formed to leave the steamer at Yokohama and join it three days later at Kobe. Percival was annoyed because the steamer had to stop at all. Any interruption in the present routine was a nuisance. He vacillated between the inconvenience of going ashore and the stupidity of remaining on board. An invitation from Mrs. Weston to join her party, and an insistent demand from Bobby Boynton, decided him. He made his preparations accordingly.



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But an unforeseen incident occurred the night before the *Saluria* landed which caused him suddenly to change his plans. He was just ready to go below for the night when an overmastering desire for one more word with Bobby seized him. By a bit of Machiavellian strategy he had outwitted Andy that afternoon, and had her entirely to himself for three blissful hours.

It was in their old haunt behind the wind-shelter, and he had taken the opportunity, if not to "shatter her to bits," at least "to remold her nearer to the heart's desire." He had done it with consummate tact, and she had responded with adorable docility. He never admired himself more than in the role of cicerone to a young and trusting maid. By the subtlest methods he knew how to convey approval or disapproval of anything from a beaded slipper to a moral sentiment. He could stir dormant ambition, rouse lagging courage, inspire patience, and all he demanded in return was unfaltering homage from the fair one.

In the present instance, however, the entire time was not devoted to correcting faults of manner and speech or to acquiring the higher Christian virtues. It was incredible how many things they found to talk about, considering the fact that art, literature, music, the drama, foreign travel, and London gossip were not among them. Bobby's way of diving unexpectedly from the general into the personal made a tete-a-tete with her peculiarly exhilarating.

The trouble was that the more one had, the more one wanted, and going to bed now without a parting word seemed to Percival really more than he had a right to ask of himself. He circled the deck several times in indecision, then he ascended the companionway and made his way aft.

A full moon hung high in the heavens, and a flood of silver poured in a dazzling stream across the level surface of the sea. The quarter-deck, the white boats amidships, and all the brass work abaft the funnels reflected the radiance.

"See who is here!" cried the irrepressible Andy from an indistinguishable group that huddled together under steamer-rugs against the big blue-and-white smoke-stack.

"May I speak to Miss Boynton for a moment?" asked Percival, icily.

"I'm afraid I can't get out," said Bobby. "Elise is sitting on my feet, and Andy and I've got on the same sweater. There's a place for you here, if you will come."

It is really too undignified an act in the life of the Honorable Percival to chronicle, but before he had time to contradict his impulse, he had actually doubled up his long legs and crawled into the small space Bobby made for him beside her. If she persisted in preferring this noisy bunch of inanity to a quiet stroll on the promenade-deck with him, then he supposed for the time being he must humor her.

Youth and love and moonlight at sea are a magic combination, however, and Percival soon decided that even though it was deuced uncomfortable to be huddled up like that, with both feet asleep, yet there were compensations.

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"Sing!" commanded Bobby, and he joined obediently in the chorus. As the night wore on a caressing coolness crept into the air, and the crowd gathered into a closer group. Percival could feel Bobby breathing near him, and could look down undisturbed into her upturned face as she sang with passionate abandon to the moon. She seemed to have entirely lost sight of her surroundings and was off on some high adventure of her own, leaving him free to watch her to his heart's content.

It was a situation fraught with danger; yet he lingered. He did more: he slipped his hand beneath the rug and sought cautiously for hers. As their palms met, and her small fingers closed responsively over his, such a thrill of satisfaction passed over him as he had never felt before. His old wounds were suddenly healed, life became a passionate love-song on a languorous, moonlit sea. But his ecstasy ceased with the music. Bobby's voice broke the spell with frightful distinctness:

[Illustration: "If you want to hold my hand, Mr. Hascombe, you are welcome to it."]

"If you want to hold my hand, Mr. Hascombe, you are welcome to it. Andy's got the other one; but if you don't mind, we'll put them all together, like that, on top of the steamer-rug."

During the laugh that followed he managed to get to his feet and make his escape. He had never been so angry in his life; he even included himself in his devastating wrath. Why shouldn't he have been insulted, laughed at, jeered at! When one allows oneself to associate with such people, he ought to expect such behavior.

"*Plebeians!*" he snarled as he jerked together the curtains of his berth and turned his face to the wall.

## IX

### DRAGGING ANCHOR

Of course, after what had happened, nothing could induce Percival to join the Weston party in Japan. He left a note of formal regret, and hastened ashore on the first launch in the morning. His one desire was to avoid those detestable young Americans, whose diabolical laughter had rung in his ears all night. The wounds received by vanity are never serious, but they are very hard to heal, and as Percival stopped ashore in this strange land he felt that he was the most unhappy of mortals.

"Call a hansom," he demanded impatiently of Judson, who stood grinning at the queer sights on the hatoba.

"There ain't none, sir."

“Of course; I forgot. But how are we to get to the hotel?”

“Carn’t say, sir, unless we go in a couple of them perambulators.”

Percival took an instant dislike to a country that forced him to ride in a ridiculous vehicle, pulled by a small bare-legged brown man in a mushroom hat. All the way to the hotel he was unhappy in the conviction that he was making a spectacle of himself.

The rooms which he had engaged in advance were not satisfactory, and it was not until he had inspected all the suites that were unoccupied that he decided upon one that commanded a view of the bay. Once established therein, he despatched Judson for his mail and for any English papers that might be found, then took up his position by a front window and sternly watched the bund.

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The picturesque harbor, full of sampans and junks, the gay streets, full of color and movement, the thousand unfamiliar sights and sounds, held no interest for the Honorable Percival. His whole attention was focused upon the jinrikishas that constantly arrived and departed at the entrance below.

He wanted to see Bobby's face and read there the signs of contrition, which he felt sure must have followed her unfeeling conduct of the night before. But he intended to punish her before he forgave. Such a violence to their friendship could not go unrebuked. Even when he received the note of apology which he felt sure she would send up the moment she reached the hotel, he would delay answering it. She must be made to suffer in order to profit by this unhappy experience.

His reflections were interrupted by a rap at the door, which called him away from the window. It proved to be a sleek Chinaman, who proffered his card, bearing the inscription:

"G. Lung Fat, Ladies' and Gents' Tailor."

G. Lung Fat, it seemed, had beheld Percival in the lobby and been greatly impressed with his bearing. It would be an honor, he urged, with the fervor of an artist craving permission to paint a subject that had captured his fancy, to cut, fit, and finish any number of garments for such a figure before the ship sailed on the morrow.

Percival was impressed. He examined the samples with the air of a connoisseur. Like most Englishmen, he had a weakness for light clothes and sun-helmets. The regalia suggested English supremacy in foreign lands. He had ordered his fourth suit and was earnestly considering a white dinner-jacket when familiar voices from the street below made him spring to the window.

It was Bobby Boynton and Andy Black, who were evidently setting forth in jinrikishas alone, Mrs. Weston and the other young people remaining to inspect the fascinating array of curios that were being displayed on the pavement. If any sorrow for past misdeeds dwelt in Bobby's bosom, there was certainly no trace of it on her face as she called gaily back over her shoulder:

"We are off for a lark; you needn't look for us until you see us."

Percival dismissed the Chinaman peremptorily, and paced his room in indignation. It was incredible that a girl who had basked in the sun of his approval could find even temporary pleasure in the feeble rushlight of Andy Black's society. Not that it made the slightest difference to him where she went or with whom. If her father saw fit to permit her to go forth in a strange city with a strange man, unchaperoned, of course it was not for him to interfere. But that she should have, at the first opportunity, disregarded his counsels, to which she had listened with such flattering attention, angered him beyond

measure. He bitterly assured himself that all women were alike, an assertion which seems to bring universal relief to the masculine mind.

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His ill humor was not decreased when Judson returned, after a long delay, and reported that the mail had been sent to the steamer. Not content with being the bearer of this unpleasant news, Judson committed the indiscretion of waxing eloquent over the charms of Japan. Percival considered it impertinent in an inferior to express enthusiasm for anything that was under the ban of his disapproval. Before the discussion ended it became his painful duty to remind Judson of the fact that he was an ass.

At tiffin-time, when he descended to the dining-room, owing to the recent arrival of two steamers, all the tables were engaged. There was one in the corridor, he was told, if he did not mind another gentleman. He did mind; he much preferred a table alone, but he also wanted his luncheon. He followed the unctuous head waiter the length of the big dining-room, winding in and out among the small tables, only to emerge finally into the corridor and find himself face to face with his *bete noire*, Captain Boynton.

"Hello! Can't lose you," was the captain's gruff greeting. "How does it happen that you aren't off with the crowd doing the sights?"

"Sights bore me," said Percival, unfolding his napkin with an air of lassitude.

"Crowds, too, eh? Twoing more in your line?"

The remark was treated with contemptuous silence while Percival devoted himself to the menu.

"Seen that girl of mine since she came ashore?" continued the captain.

"Miss Boynton?" asked Percival, as if not quite sure of the identity of the person inquired for. "Oh, yes, I believe I did see her early this morning. She went out with Mr. Black."

"Good! He'll show her a thing or two."

"Rather extraordinary," Percival could not help commenting, "the way young American girls go about alone like that."

"Alone? What's the matter with Andy?"

"But I mean unchaperoned. Dare say young Black is very good in his way, but he can't be called discreet."

"How do you mean?"

"Taking your daughter into that nasty mess of Chinamen in the steerage, for instance, to watch them play fan-tan."

“What of that? She only lost a couple of quarters and had a dollar’s worth of fun. Can’t see it was any worse than keeping her out at the prow until midnight, or taking her up to the crow’s-nest.” The captain pushed back his chair, and smiled with maddening significance. “See here, my young friend, you needn’t worry about Bobby. She’s been taking care of herself for twenty years. You better look after yourself.”

The Honorable Percival did not answer. He got his eye-glass right and looked straight ahead of him.

But the captain was not through. He leaned across the table and shook a warning finger:

“Beware of J. Lucy,” he said, then he took a smiling departure.

Through the rest of the meal and well into the afternoon Percival puzzled his brain over that cryptic warning. When its meaning dawned upon him he flung “Guillim’s Display of Heraldry” clear across the room, and used language not becoming an English gentleman. He assured himself for the hundredth time that Americans were the most odious people in the world, and the captain the most convincing proof of it.



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The afternoon dragged miserably, and the prospect of waiting about the hotel until the steamer sailed at noon the next day appalled him. The obvious thing, of course, was to go out and see the city, but he had declared to Judson that there was nothing worth seeing, and one must be consistent before one's servants. Even the morrow offered no abatement to his misery. Most of the people he knew were going from Yokohama to Kobe by rail, and he pictured himself the only guest at the captain's table for three mortal days.

At three o'clock he went down to the terrace and took his seat at a small table that commanded a view of the hotel entrance. To one with a free mind the scene was highly diverting, with jinrikishas and occasional victorias thronging the bund, and gay parties constantly arriving and departing. Coolies in blue, with mysterious Chinese lettering on their kimonos and with bright towels about their heads, trotted past; women with blackened teeth and with babies strapped on their backs clattered by on wooden shoes; street venders sang their savory wares; merchants displayed treasures of lacquer and ivory, street dancers posed and sang to the tinkle of the samisen.

But to Percival it was at best a purgatory where he seemed to be doomed to wait through eternity. Not that he meant to speak to Bobby Boynton when she arrived or make the slightest sign of forgiveness. That she should have allowed Andy Black to keep her out from eleven in the morning until after three in the afternoon was even more shocking than her behavior to him the night before. He was resolved to show her by every means in his power that to even a disinterested acquaintance like himself her conduct was wholly unpardonable. Meanwhile that emotion to which the captain had so grossly alluded took entire and absorbing possession of him.

Toward the middle of the afternoon Mrs. Weston joined him on the terrace in an anxious mood.

"Have you seen anything of that naughty Bobby Boynton?" she asked. "I am quite distracted about her. Our train for Kyoto leaves in half an hour. You don't suppose anything has happened to her, do you?"

"I really can't say," said Percival, with a shrug that suggested the direst possibilities.

"We simply must go on to Kyoto tonight," continued Mrs. Weston, anxiously nervous. "My cousin would never forgive me if I disappointed him. You see, he's lived in Kyoto for years, and he's promised to take us out to an old Buddhist temple on a wonderful sacred mountain that I can't pronounce. We've been looking forward to it for weeks."

Percival stood back of his chair and watched his tea getting cold. The suggestion of something having happened to Bobby had changed his anger to sharp solicitude. Gruesome tales of brutality toward foreigners in Eastern ports came back to him.

“I wonder,” said Mrs. Weston, persuasively, “if you would mind taking a jinrikisha and going down to Benten Dori to see if they are there. I have no one else to send.”

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"I don't know that I should care to go myself," said Percival, "but I'll send my man."

Judson having been despatched, Percival with difficulty refrained from following him. Mrs. Weston's solicitude as she hovered between the telephone-booth and the desk was infectious, and he found himself pacing from entrance to entrance, imagining the most calamitous causes for the delay.

It was not until a joyful exclamation from Elise Weston announced the approach of the truants that he drew a deep breath of relief and retired to the reading-room. He was more than ever resolved not to see Bobby; to her former transgressions was now added the new and unpardonable offense of having made him acutely anxious about her.

He took up an old copy of the "Graphic," and resolutely read of events that had taken place before he left England. He even glanced through the pages of the innocuous "Gentlewoman," and tried to concentrate upon an article entitled "Favorite Fabrics for Autumn." In vain were his efforts; every sound from the lobby or the street claimed his instant attention. At last, when an unmistakable commotion without gave evidence that the Weston party was leaving, he got up, despite himself, and went to the window.

They were all there, Mrs. Weston, Elise, the Scotchman, Andy, and Bobby, all climbing into their jinrikishas in the greatest possible haste and in the highest possible spirits. One after another the jinrikishas trundled away, until only Bobby's was left while her runner adjusted his sandal. Percival saw her turn in her seat and eagerly scan the terrace and the windows of the hotel. Then suddenly she caught sight of him, and her face broke into a radiant smile as she waved her hand and nodded.

A moment later and his eyes were straining after a figure that was fast disappearing up the bund. It was a small, alert figure, disturbingly young and sweet and buoyant. The flying jinrikisha, the hair blowing across her cheek, the scarf that fluttered in the breeze, all suggested flight, and flight to the masculine mind is only another term for pursuit.

He flung down his paper and strode out to the lobby.

"When is the next train for Kioto?" he demanded.

"At ten to-night, sir."

"Make out my bill, and get my luggage down; I'm leaving on that train."

"But, sir, you have made no reservation. You may have to sit up all night."

"Have you any objections?" asked the Honorable Percival in his most insular manner.

# X

## ON THE SEARCH

The clerk's prophecy proved all too true. Percival and his valet sat all night in a crowded, smoke-dimmed car, between a fat Japanese wrestler and a fatter Buddhist priest, both of whom squatted on their heels and read aloud in monotonous, wailing tones. The air was close, and the floor was strewn with orange peel, spilt tea, and cigarette ends. Percival's fastidious senses were offended as they had never been offended before. Under ordinary circumstances nothing could have induced him to submit to such discomfort, but the circumstances were not ordinary.

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The alternative of remaining calmly in Yokohama and allowing an aggressive young American to monopolize the girl of his even temporary choice was utterly intolerable. Moreover, he was coming to see that while Bobby had failed to droop under the frost of his displeasure, it was still probable that she would melt into penitence at the first smile of royal forgiveness.

During the long hours of that interminable night he had ample time to reflect upon the folly of pursuing an object which he did not mean to possess. But though wisdom urged discretion, a blue eye and a furtive dimple beckoned.

When morning came, he straightened his stiff legs and, picking his way through the wooden sandals that cluttered the aisle, went out to the small platform. The train had stopped at a village, and a boy with a tray suspended from his shoulders, bearing boxes of native food, was howling dismally:

"Bento! Eo Bento!"

Percival beckoned to him. "I say, can't you get me a roll and a cup of coffee!"

"Bento?" asked the boy, expectantly.

"Coffee!" shouted Percival. "Rather strong, you know, and hot."

"Tan San? Rhomenade?" asked the boy.

"Coffee. Cafe. What a silly fool!" Percival muttered.

About this time several windows in the car went up, and many voices took up the cry of "Bento." When Percival reentered, he found that a large pot of boiling water had been deposited in the aisle, and small tea-pots had been distributed among the passengers. Everybody was partaking of breakfast, and everybody seemed to be enjoying it, especially Judson, who was attacking his neatly arranged bamboo sprouts, pickled eels, and snowy rice with avidity.

"This is a bit of all right, sir," he said with enthusiasm. "Shall I fetch you a box, sir!"

Percival lifted a protesting hand. And yet the pungent odor of the pickle and the still smoking rice was not unpleasant. He watched with increasing appetite the disappearance of the various viands. There were occasions when a man might even envy his valet.

At the Kyoto Hotel there was no record of the Weston party, so he snatched a hasty bite, and rushed on to the other large hotel. It was on a hillside well out from the city, and two coolies were required for each jinrikisha. Seeing that they had a newly arrived tourist, they were moved to show him the sights, much to Percival's annoyance.

“San-ju-san-gen-do Temple,” the man in front said, putting down the shafts of the jinrikisha confidently. “Thirty-three thousand images of great god Kwannon. Come see? No? So desu ka?”

Later he stopped at a flower-girt tea-house.

“Geisha maybe! Very fine dancers. Come see? No? So desu ka?”

So it continued, the two small guides trying in vain to arouse some interest in the stern young gentleman who sat so rigidly in the jinrikisha, with his mind bent solely on reaching the Yaami Hotel in the shortest possible time.

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On his arrival, he met with disappointment. The effusive proprietor informed him that a party of five, "one single lady, and two young married couples, he thought," had breakfasted there and left immediately with Dr. Weston for Hieizan. They would not return until night.

"What, pray, is Hieizan?" Percival asked, dimly remembering Mrs. Weston's outlined plan.

"Very grand mountain," said the proprietor; "view of Lake Biwa. Biggest pine-tree in the world."

The last thing that Percival desired to see was a big pine-tree, but the prospect of sharing the sight of it with Bobby Boynton spurred him to further inquiry.

"But they must come back, mustn't they? Perhaps I could meet them halfway?"

"Oh, yes. They go by *kago* over mountain; you go by 'rickisha to Otsu, and wait. Very nice, very easy. All come home together. I furnish fine jinrikisha and very good man, Sanno; spik very good English."

Percival had an early lunch, and, leaving Judson sitting disconsolately among the handbags, started for Otsu. From the first his runner justified his reputation of speaking English; he began by counting up to fifty, looking over his shoulder for approval, and expecting to be prompted when his memory failed. He received Percival's peremptory order to be silent with an uncomprehending smile and a glib recitation of the Twenty-third Psalm. He was an unusually tall coolie, and the jinrikisha-shafts resting in his hands were a foot higher than they ought to be, throwing his passenger at a most awkward angle. Before Otsu was reached a sudden rainstorm came on, and Percival was made yet more uncomfortable by having the hood of the jinrikisha put up, and a piece of stiff oilcloth tucked about him.

By the time he rattled into the courtyard of the small Japanese inn, he was cramped and cold and very cross. Even the voluble welcome of the proprietor and the four girls, who received him on their knees, failed to revive his spirits. It was going to be deuced awkward explaining his sudden appearance to the Weston party. There might even be jokes at his expense. He decided to take a room and not make his appearance unless everything seemed propitious.

An animated discussion was in progress between Sanno and the innkeeper, the import of which Sanno explained with much difficulty. Owing to the autumn festival of the imperial ancestors, the inn was quite full, but hospitality could not be refused to so distinguished a foreign guest.

"Foreign bedstead is not," concluded Sanno; "foreign food is not; hot bath is."

“I sha’n’t want a bed, and I sha’n’t want a bath,” said Percival, then, seeing that a diminutive maiden was unloosing his shoes, he added petulantly: “My boots are quite dry. Tell her to go away.”

But Sanno was getting his jinrikisha under cover, and Percival had to submit to the gentle, but firm, determination of the *nesan*. She was small and demure, but her attitude towards him was that of a nurse towards a refractory child. She conducted him, with much sliding of screens, through several compartments, to a room at the back of the house that opened out on a tiny balcony overhanging a noisy stream.



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Percival, standing in his stockinged feet on the soft mats, looked about him. The room was devoid of furniture, its only decoration being a vase of carefully arranged flowers in an alcove, and a queer kakemono that hung on an ivory stick. As he was inspecting the latter, the nesan again approached him.

This time she seemed to have designs upon his coat, and despite his protest began to remove it. When he forestalled her at one point she attacked another, until the situation became so embarrassing that he shouted indignantly for Sanno.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded furiously. "Why doesn't the girl go away, and leave me alone?"

"Gentleman bass already," said Sanno, soothingly. "Kimono? So?" he joined forces with the nesan to get Percival out of his clothes and into the fresh-flowered kimono that lay on the mat.

"But I never take a tub in the afternoon," persisted Percival.

Preparations went politely, but steadily, forward.

"What's this she's putting on me?" he cried. "I say, I *won't* wear a sash; the whole thing's too beastly silly. Tell her to take it off."

But despite his protests, the long red scarf was wound about his waist and tied with many deft twists and pats into a butterfly bow at the back. Seeing that protests were quite useless, and being still chilled from his long ride, he decided to resist no longer, but to take the bath that was so insisted upon, and be free to watch undisturbed for the returning party.

The nesan produced a sponge and towel from her long sleeves and, taking Percival by the hand, led him down the hall. Once in the big, square wooden tank, with the hot water up to his chin, he forgot his trouble, and gave himself up to the luxury of the moment. Even the knowledge that the determined little nesan was waiting outside the door, and that she frequently applied a round, black eye to a hole in the screen, did not interfere with his enjoyment.

When he was again in his room, clothed except for his shoes, his troubles once more assailed him. Suppose the Weston party did not return by this route! The possibility of missing Bobby fired his desire to see her at once. He had never known twenty-four hours to contain so many minutes.

During the early stages of his malady it had only been necessary for him to recall the aristocratic faces and bearing of his mother and sisters to have his vision instantly cleared and his reason enthroned. Later it became necessary to add the captain's sturdy countenance to his list of exorcising spirits. Now Bobby routed them all, not only

taking entire possession of his mind, but actually invading Hascombe Hall, dancing through the gloomy, corridors, and waking the echoes with her youth and merriment.

Of course the Honorable Percival tried to stamp out these wild imaginings, and assured himself repeatedly that the moment he landed in Hong-Kong the whole episode would be relegated to oblivion. But Hong-Kong was yet ten days away, and Percival saw no use in forgetting before he had to. He went out to the courtyard and impatiently surveyed the rain-soaked road.

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"No come," said Sanno, cheerfully, from the step where he was keeping watch. "Tea?"

Without waiting for an answer, he clapped his hands, calling, "*O Cha!*"

Another small maiden in a cherry-blossom kimono, carrying a brazier full of live coals, trotted around the corner and conducted Percival back to his apartment. She proved even more irritating than the first one, for during the tea-making she stopped many times to examine his cuff-links, wrist-watch, and ring, making purring exclamations of delight over each discovery. When he used his monocle she tried it also, and when he took out his cigarette-case, she must examine every detail and help herself to a cigarette into the bargain. Percival was acutely bored. He regarded her as a persistent fly that refused to be brushed away. He sat with his back against the paper screen, his stockinged feet rigidly extended, drinking his tea as solemnly as if he had been in the most formal drawing-room of Grosvenor Square.

The rainy afternoon closed in to twilight, and still the Weston party did not come. Percival's impatience gave place to anger, but he doggedly waited.

"Could they have gone back another way?" he demanded of Sanno.

"Way?" repeated Sanno.

Percival made a drawing on paper and tried to convey his meaning, but it was useless.

"Merican game?" asked Sanno, grinning.

At last, in desperation, Percival decided to return.

"Yaami Hotel, Kioto," he directed.

"Very sorry," said Sanno. "No come Kioto to-night. Big rain. Bridge him very bad. Jinrikisha upset, maybe."

Percival declared this to be nonsense; he insisted that he would start immediately. But as Sanno refused to bring out the jinrikisha, it was not possible to carry out his intention. Then the Honorable Percival, who was not used to being crossed, lost his temper, and the entire household came out to see him do it. Sanno and the proprietor watched him with bland and smiling faces, and the girls tucked their heads behind their sleeves and laughed immoderately at his scowls and vehement gestures.

Seeing that he was gaining nothing by argument, he stalked sullenly back to his room, where active preparations were in progress for dinner. The brazier which had been used for the tea still stood in the middle of the floor, and all around it were porcelain bowls and lacquer trays, and a wooden bucket full of steaming rice.



He took refuge on the two-foot balcony and gazed gloomily on the sprawling stream below. The Westons were probably back in Kyoto by this time, and would be off again in the morning before he could possibly get there. What headway might not that presumptuous Andy Black make with Bobby Boynton in forty-eight uninterrupted hours!

His tragic reflections were interrupted by the announcement that dinner was served. Seated on the floor before a twelve-inch table, with disgust written on every feature, he drank fish-soup out of a bowl, and tasted dish after dish as it was borne in and respectfully placed before him.

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"Haven't you a fork?" he asked when the chop-sticks were proffered him.

"Forku?" repeated one of the three maidens who knelt before him; then she joined the other two in a giggling chorus.

There had been moments in the Honorable Percival's life when his dignity trembled on its pedestal, but never had it swayed so perilously as when he tried to use chop-sticks for the first time under the fire of those six mischievous black eyes. It was only by maintaining his haughtiest manner that he remained master of the situation.

When bedtime came, a new difficulty arose. Sanno's prophecy that "foreign bedstead probably is not" proved true. A neat pile of quilts in the middle of the floor was offered as a substitute, and Percival, after a long argument, stretched himself on the soft heap and courted oblivion. But the Fates were against him. As if his thoughts were not sufficient to torment him, hundreds of mosquitos swarmed up from the stream below, and assailed him so viciously that at midnight he rose and called loudly for Sanno.

With Sanno came the household, all eager to know what new excitement the foreign gentleman was creating. When the trouble was explained, elaborate preparations were set on foot to remedy it. After much discussion, hooks were driven into the corners of the ceiling, and a huge net cage, the size of the room, suspended therefrom.

During this performance Percival suffered great embarrassment, owing to the fact that the pink silk underwear in which he was arrayed was an object of the liveliest interest to the ladies.

When at last he was left alone, he fell into a troubled sleep. He dreamed that the world was peopled solely by mosquitos, and he knew them all, Captain Boynton, Andy Black, Sanno, the Lady Hortense, and even Bobby herself. One by one they came and nipped him while he lay helpless, clad only in a pink suit of silken underwear.

## XI

### THE GYMKHANA

The experiences of his first twenty-four hours in Japan were repeated with variations three times before Percival reached Kobe. His mad desire to overtake Bobby had carried him from Kyoto to Nara, where he went to the wrong hotel and missed the Weston party by fifteen minutes. From Nara he made a night journey to Ozaka, during which the small engine broke down in the middle of a rice-field, proving a sorry substitute for the wings of love.

It was with a sigh of relief that he at last boarded the *Saluria* and sank into his steamer-chair. At least there was one satisfaction, no one but Judson knew of his futile search,

and Judson was too well trained to discuss his master's affairs. How good it was to be on board once more! He felt an almost sentimental attachment for the steamer which three weeks ago had fallen so short of what an ocean-liner ought to be. Then the *Saluria* was only an old Atlantic transport transferred to the Pacific to do passenger service, but now she was a veritable ship of romance, freighted with memories and dreams.

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The passengers, coming aboard, seemed like old friends, and he found himself greeting each in turn with a nod that surprised them as much as it did him. At any moment now Bobby Boynton might appear, and the prospect of seeing her raised his spirits to such a height that he wondered if he would be able to play the role he had assigned himself.

He had definitely decided to be an injured, but forgiving, friend. She should be made no less aware of his wounds than of his generosity. She would doubtless recall another incident in which he had met ingratitude with noble forgiveness, and she would rush to make reparation. If there was one thing he prided himself upon it was a knowledge of women. Never but once had his judgment erred, and even then, could he but remember all his impressions, he doubtless had had moments of misgiving.

Bobby's voice sounded on the ladder, and the next moment she was tripping down the deck toward him. It was in vain that he kept his eyes on the letter in his hand, and assumed an air of complete absorption. She came straight toward him, and dropped into the chair next his own.

"Oh, but you missed it!" she said. "I never had so much fun in all my life."

He did not answer. Instead, he lifted a pair of melancholy eyes, and looked at her steadfastly.

"Oh," she said after a puzzled moment, "I forgot. We are mad, aren't we? One of us owes the other an apology."

"Which do you think it is!" he asked gently, as if appealing to her higher nature.

Bobby, with her head on one side, considered the matter. "Well," she said, "you did something I didn't like, and I did something you didn't like. Strikes me the drinks are on us both."

"The—" Percival's horrified look caused her to exclaim contritely:

"Excuse me, I'll do better next time. Come on, let's make up. Put it there and call it square!"

It was impossible to refuse the small hand that had been the cause of the trouble, but even as Percival thrilled to its clasp he realized his danger. During the course of his twenty-eight years he had always been able to prescribe a certain course for himself and follow it with reasonable certainty. Exciting moments were now occurring when he was unable to tell what his next word or move was going to be. It is quite certain that he never intended to take her hand in both of his and look at her in the way he was doing now.

"What a bunch of letters!" she said, getting possession of her hand. "You see, I have some, too. I'll read you some of mine if you'll read me some of yours. Will you?"

"Which will you have?"

"May I choose? What fun! Read me the one with the sunburst on it."

He obediently adjusted his monocle, broke the seal, and began:

*"My Dear Son:*

"I cannot, I fear, make my letter so long or so interesting as I could desire, owing to the fact that I am afflicted with a slight lumbago, but I will proceed without further preliminary to set down the few incidents of interest that have occurred since my last writing. Your brother is sorely harassed by affairs in the city, and when here he is in constant altercation with the grooms about exercising your horses. I fear you will find them sadly out of condition upon your return."



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"I call that a darn shame!" said Bobby, sympathetically, then her hand flew to her mouth as she saw Percival's raised eyebrows.

"There I go again! You see, I've been running around with Andy Black, and nobody ever puts on airs with Andy."

Percival gave a sigh of discouragement, then resumed his reading:

"We have had few guests at the hall since your departure until yesterday, when who should call but the Duchess of Dare!" Percival paused, and glanced hurriedly down the page.

"Go on!" commanded Bobby.

"It won't interest you in the slightest."

"But it *does*. Unless there's something you don't want me to hear."

"Not at all. Where was I? Oh, yes, 'call but the Duchess of Dare! She has let her house to some friends, and has come away from London for a fortnight's rest. It was rather queer of her calling, wasn't it? She was less embarrassed than you would imagine and actually had the effrontery to mention Hortense."

"Who is Hortense?" asked Bobby, all curiosity.

"Her daughter."

"Well, why shouldn't her mother mention her?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Percival, in deep water; "rather bad form, perhaps."

"For a mother to mention her own child?" Then the light dawned. "Perhaps she is the one you were telling me about."

Percival hastily folded the letter and slipped it into its emblazoned envelop.

"Is she?" persisted Bobby.

"Is she what?"

"The girl you let down easy?"

"Well, really, Miss Boynton—"

"Roberta," corrected Bobby.

“Very well, Roberta. It’s your time to read to me. May I choose a letter?”

“No, I’ll choose one myself.”

“But that isn’t fair. I let you select any one you liked.”

She thought it over, then somewhat reluctantly held out three envelopes. It was so evident that she was trying to keep back the bulky one with the bold address that Percival instantly selected it.

“Some of it’s secrets,” she warned him, “and you mustn’t peep.”

“Of course not. But who is it from?”

“That wasn’t in the game. I didn’t ask you.”

“You didn’t need to; but go ahead.”

“It’s all about the ranch,” said Bobby, looking over the pages and smiling to herself.

“They’ve had an awful row with the new broncho-buster, and Hal had to punch his head for being cruel to the horses. I knew that fellow wasn’t any good.” She read on for a while to herself. “Says the shooting promises to be great this year. My! but I hate to miss it!”

“Whatever do you find to shoot?”

“A little of everything from teal duck to Canada goose.”

“Really!” exclaimed Percival, with interest. “And do you shoot?”

“Oh, yes, some. I’m not as good as the boys. You see, I have to use Pa Joe’s old No. 10 choke-bore shot-gun, when I really ought to have a 16-bore fowling-piece.”

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Here was a new and wholly unsuspected bond of sympathy between them. Percival would have plunged at once into a dissertation on a subject upon which he considered himself an authority had not the fluttering sheets of the letter stirred vague misgivings in his bosom.

"You aren't playing fair!" he cried. "You are telling me what is in your letter without reading it to me."

"So I am!" She looked over page after page. "Here, this will do. It says: 'I wish you could have been along last night when I hit the trail for the Lower Ranch. You know what that old road looks like in the moonlight, all deep black in the gorges, and white on the cliffs, and not a dog-gone sound but the hoof-beats of your horse and the clank of the bridle-chains. Why, when you come out in the open and the wind gets to ripping 'cross the grass-fields, and the moon gets busy with every little old blade, and there's miles of beauty stretched out far as your eye can reach, I'd back it against any sight in the world. Only last night I wasn't thinking much about the scenery. I was thinking—'" Bobby stopped short, declaring that she had a cinder in her eye.

"Can't be a cinder, out here in the bay," protested Percival.

"Well, it's whatever they have out here."

"And sha'n't I ever know what your friend was thinking?"

"He was probably thinking of his dinner," said Bobby, gazing at him reassuringly with her free eye.

After she had departed to make sure that the steamer got properly under way, he tortured himself with suspicions. What possible secrets could she have with this unknown friend, who waxed sentimental over moonlit trails and wind-swept grassfields? Had not some one told him of an unhappy love-affair? He searched his memory. Suddenly there came to him the disturbing figure of a stalwart young man on a broncho, with leather overalls, jingling spurs, a silk handkerchief knotted about his throat, and a pair of keen, humorous eyes lighting up a sun-bronzed face.

Then he smiled at his quick alarm. Hadn't she told him it was one of her foster-brothers, one of those lads whom he persisted in regarding as children? It was the most natural thing in the world that an impulsive, big-hearted creature like Bobby would be on terms of affectionate intimacy with those boys with whom she had been brought up.

He did not feel fully reassured, however, until he put the question to her flatly:

"That letter you were reading me," he said at his first opportunity—"you won't mind telling me if it is from that chap I saw at the station?"

“I don’t mind telling you. But you mustn’t tell the captain.”

“The captain? Oh, to be sure. Doesn’t fancy your friends, the Fords. I remember.”

From that time on he boldly and openly entered the lists for Bobby’s favor. The ten days he had allowed himself to drift with the tide of his inclination were passing with incredible swiftness, and he resorted to every means, from the subtlest strategy to the most domineering insolence, to monopolize every waking moment of her time.

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She responded to all his suggestions with flattering promptness until preparations were set on foot to hold a huge gymkhana, in which everybody on board should take part. The enterprise fired her enthusiasm instantly. She was a born organizer, and the prospect of a whole day devoted to sports captivated her. The project served as a peg on which she and Percival hung their first quarrel.

"Of course I'm going into it," she exclaimed hotly, "and so are you."

"The idea!" said Percival. "I shouldn't think of it for a moment. Fancy me chasing an egg around the deck in a teaspoon, and all that sort of thing!"

"But there are lots of other contests. There's the long jump, and the tug-of-war—"

"And pinning tails on donkeys," added Percival, bitterly. "Dare say you'd like to see me doing that."

"I'd like to see you doing anything that would make you more sociable," flashed Bobby.

For the rest of the day Percival sulked in the smoking-room, raging at the time that was stolen from him, and given to the making of silly rules and the buying of trifling prizes.

On the morning of the sports he arrayed himself in one of the white creations of G. Lung Fat's, giving special attention to the accessories of his toilet. Then, with marked indifference to the games, which were the all-absorbing topic of the day, he had his chair moved to the far side of the deck, and sat there in superior isolation during the whole morning.

But even there he could not avoid hearing what was taking place; shouts of laughter, groans, and jeers over a failure, and frantic applause over a victory, were wafted to him constantly. Now and then some one hurried by with the information that Andy Black had won the quoits prize or that Andy Black had won the bottle-race. His lip curled contemptuously at sports that required a mere trickster's turn of the wrist or an animal's sense of direction. He would like to see Andy attempt a long jump or a mile race. Imagine the fat pink-and-white youth on a polo pony!

At luncheon Andy's praises were passed from lip to lip. The affair had assumed an international significance. A Scotchman, a German, a Japanese, and an American were striving for first place. The captain's patriotism ran so high that he offered to set up the handsomest dinner the Astor Hotel in Shanghai could afford if Andy came out victorious.

In vain Percival sought to hold Bobby's attention. The tapers in her eyes were lighted for Andy, and he was obliged to undergo the new and intolerable sensation of sitting in a darkened niche and watching the candles burn at an adjoining shrine.

The slightest hint of deflection in one upon whom he had bestowed his favor maddened him. He had showered upon this ungrateful girl attentions the very husks of which would have sustained several English girls he knew through a lifetime of patient waiting. He recalled their unswerving loyalty with a glow at his heart.

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Ah, he thought, one must look to England for ideal womanhood. Where else was to be found that beautiful deference, that blind reliance, that unswerving loyalty—At the word “loyalty” a stabbing memory of Lady Hortense punctured his eloquence.

During the afternoon he found it impossible to escape the games. The potato and three-legged races brought the contestants to his side of the deck, and his reading was constantly interrupted by an avalanche of noisy spectators who rushed through the cross passages from one side of the boat to the other, exhibiting a perfectly ridiculous amount of excitement.

Andy, it seemed, had only one more entry to win before claiming the day’s championship.

“He’ll get it!” Percival overheard the captain saying gleefully to Mrs. Weston. “None of ’em are in it with America when it comes to sports.”

Percival flicked the ashes from his cigar, and, carefully adjusting his tie, rose, and made his way to the judges’ table.

“How many more events are there?” he asked in a superior tone.

“One,” was the answer.

“How many entries?”

“Two. Mr. Black and the Scotch gentleman.”

“Make it three,” said Percival, as if he were ordering cocktails.

In the confusion of preparing for the last and most elaborate feature of the day, Percival’s enlistment was not discovered. It was not until the contestants ranged themselves in front of the judges’ table that a buzz of fresh interest and amazement swept the deck. First came the Scot, lean, wiry, and deadly determined; then came Andy, plump and pink, with his fair hair ruffled, and a laughing retort on his lips for every sally that was sent in his direction. Last came the Honorable Percival, a distinguished figure in immaculate array, wearing upon his aristocratic features a look of contemptuous superiority.

“What are the rules of the game?” he inquired, looking into space.

“There’s just one rule,” called Captain Boynton from the background—“Get there.”

“The American motto, I believe,” said Percival, quietly, and the crowd laughed.

The Scot was the first to start, and Percival watched anxiously to see the nature of the race he had entered. He saw his adversary dash forward as the signal sounded, climb over a pile of upturned chairs, scramble under a table, scale a high net fence, then disappear around the deck, only to emerge later from the mouth of a funnel-shaped tunnel, through which his contortions had been followed by shrieks of merriment.

Percival realized too late what he had let himself in for. Not for worlds would he have subjected himself to such buffoonery had he known. It was not the sport of a gentleman; it was the play of a circus clown! He watched with horrified disgust as the Scot's grimy face and tousled head emerged from the canvas cavern.

"Four minutes and five seconds," called the umpire.



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Andy Black stepped confidently forward amid a burst of applause.

"The champion Roly-Poly of the Pacific," some one called.

"The *Saluria's* Little Sunbeam," suggested another.

Andy smiled blandly, and kissed his fingertips. The signal sounded, and he bounded off, bouncing from one obstacle to another like a rubber ball. It was only in the twenty-yard dash from the net fence to the canvas tunnel that he lost ground.

"Four minutes, two seconds," announced the umpire as Andy scrambled out on all fours.

At that moment Percival would willingly have exchanged places with the grimmest stoker in the hold. Was it possible that he had, of his own accord, placed himself in this absurd and undignified position for the sole purpose of defeating a common, commercial traveler who had dared to deflect the natural course of a certain damsel's smiles! He writhed under the ignominy of it. What if he were defeated? What if—

The signal sounded, and instinctively he hurled himself forward. As he scrambled over the upturned chairs he heard a sound that struck terror to his soul: it was the unmistakable hiss of tearing linen. The hastily made garments of G. Lung Fat had proved unequal to the strain put upon them. Percival lost his head completely when he realized that his waistcoat was split up the back from hem to collar, and that he had become an object of the wildest hilarity.

He might have fled the scene then and there, leaving Andy to enjoy his laurels undisturbed, had he not caught sight of Bobby frantically motioning him to go on. Setting his teeth grimly, he went down on all fours and scrambled under the table, then resolutely tackled that swaying, sagging network of ropes that barred his progress. Again and again he got nearly to the top, only to have his foot go through the wide bars and leave him hanging there in the most awkward and ungainly position. It seemed to him an eternity that he hung ignominiously, like a fly in a spider's web, while the crowd went wild with merriment.

Then suddenly all his fighting blood rose, and forgetting the spectators, and even forgetting Bobby, he doggedly grappled with those yielding ropes until he got a foothold, swung himself over the top, cleared the entanglement below, and made a flying dash for the yawning mouth of canvas at the far end of the deck. It was incredibly hot and suffocating inside, but he wriggled frantically forward, clawing and kicking like a crab. At last a dim light ahead spurred him to one final gallant effort.

"Four minutes!" called the umpire as the Honorable Percival Hascombe emerged, blinking and breathless, and staggered to his feet. His clothes were soiled and torn, his hair was on end, there was dust in his eyes, and dirt in his mouth.

The fickle audience went wild. The dark horse had won, and public favor immediately swung in his direction. But it was not the favor of the public that Percival sought; it was the homage of a certain rebellious maiden, who must be taught that he was the master of any situation in which he found himself.

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Bobby was not slow to proffer her congratulations. She gave them with both hands, to say nothing of her eyes and her dimple.

"I pulled for you!" she whispered eagerly. "I almost prayed for you. I wouldn't have seen you beaten for the world."

As Percival, elated by her enthusiasm, stood shaking hands right and left, he felt a curious and unfamiliar warmth stealing over him. All these people whom he had looked upon until to-day as so many figureheads stalking about suddenly became human beings. He found, to his surprise, that he knew their names and they knew his. He sat on a table, swinging his feet in unison with a lot of other young feet, while he sipped lemonade from the same glass as Bobby Boynton.

[Illustration: He sat on a table swinging his feet in unison with a lot of other young feet, while he sipped lemonade from the same glass as Bobby Boynton.]

As a matter of fact, the Honorable Percival Hascombe was experiencing a novel sensation. He was enjoying a sense of fellowship, to which all his life he had been a stranger.

## XII

### THE SONG OF THE SIREN

By the time the *Saluria* anchored off Shanghai, the fires in Percival's bosom had assumed the proportions of a conflagration. No sooner were they seemingly conquered by the cold stream of reason that was poured upon them than they broke forth again with fresh and alarming violence.

On the launch coming up the Hwang-pu River he took the precaution of engaging Bobby Boynton's company not only for the day on shore, but for the evening as well. With hardened effrontery he bore the young lady away in exactly the high-handed manner so bitterly condemned in Andy Black at Yokohama.

The day on shore was one he was destined never to forget. The glamour of it suffused even material old China with a roseate hue. With gracious condescension he visited gaily decked temples and many-storied pagodas, he loitered in silk and porcelain shops, and wound in and out of narrow, ill-smelling streets, even allowing Bobby to conduct him through that amazing quarter known as Pig Alley. He not only submitted to all these diversions; he demanded more. He seemed to have developed an ambition to leave no place of interest in or about Shanghai unvisited.

Tiffin-time found them at a well-known tea-house in Nanking Road—a tea-house with golden dragons climbing over its walls and long wooden signs bearing cabalistic figures

swinging in the wind like so many banners. Percival secured a table on the upper balcony, where they could look down on the passing throng, and here in the intimate solitude of a foreign crowd they had their lunch.

Bobby was too excited to eat; she hung over the balcony, exclaiming at every new sight and sound, and appealing to Percival constantly for enlightenment. Fortunately he had spent part of the previous day poring over a Shanghai guide-book, so he was able to meet her inquiries with the most amazing satisfaction.

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"I don't see how any one human being can know as much as you do!" she exclaimed, with a look that Buddha might have envied.

"Even I make mistakes occasionally," said Percival, modestly. "Can't always be right, you know."

"But you are," she persisted; "you are always abominably right, and I am always wrong."

"Adorably wrong," amended Percival, assisting with the tea-things.

"Two, three, four?" she asked, holding up the sugar-tongs.

"Doesn't matter so long as I have you to look at."

Now, when an Englishman ceases to be particular about the amount of sugar in his tea, you may know he is very far gone indeed. By the time he had drained three cups of the jasmine-scented beverage and basked in the brilliance of Bobby's smiles through the smoking of two cigars, he was feeling decidedly heady.

"If we are going to the races, we really *must* start," declared Bobby when she found the situation getting difficult.

"What's the use of going anywhere?" asked Percival, blowing one ring of smoke through another.

"Why, we are seeing the sights of Shanghai. You said you were crazy about China."

"So I am. You are quite determined on the races?"

"Quite," said Bobby.

Their way to the track lay along the famous Bubbling Well Road, and as they bowled along in a somewhat imposing victoria, with a couple of liveried Chinamen on the box, Bobby sat bolt upright, her cheeks flushed, and her eager eyes drinking in the sights.

It was a scene sufficiently gay to hold the interest of a much more sophisticated person than the untraveled young lady from Wyoming. The whole of society, it appeared, was on route to the races. The road was thronged with smart traps full of brilliantly dressed people of every nationality. There were gay parties from the various legations, French, Russian, Japanese, German, English, American. In and out among the whirling wheels of the foreigners poured the unending procession of native life, unperturbed, unconcerned. A Chinese lady in black satin trousers and gorgeous embroidered coat, wearing a magnificent head-dress of jade and pearls, rode side by side with a coolie who trundled a wheelbarrow which carried his wife on one side and his week's provisions on the other. Water-carriers, street vendors, jinrikisha-runners, women with

bound feet, children on foot, and children strapped on the backs of their mothers, crossed and recrossed, surged in and out.

But the Honorable Percival concerned himself little with these petty details. To him China was only a pleasing background for Miss Roberta Boynton; he saw no further than her eager, smiling eyes, and heard nothing more distant than the ripple of her laughter.

At the races they found an absorbing bond of interest. The love of horse-flesh was ingrained in both, and the merits of the various ponies provoked endless discussion. Lights were beginning to twinkle on the bund when they drove back to the hotel.

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"Where shall we go to-night!" asked Percival, as eager at the end of this eight hours' tete-a-tete as he had been at the start.

"To the ball, of course," said Bobby. "The hotel is giving it in honor of the *Saluria*."

"Heavens! what a bore! Can't we dodge it?"

"You can if you want to. Andy'll take me. He's just waiting to see if you renig."

"Renig?" repeated Percival.

"Yes," said Bobby—"fluke, back out; you know what I mean."

That settled it with Percival. Five minutes before the hour appointed he was waiting impatiently in one of the small reception-rooms to conduct Miss Boynton to that most abhorred of all functions, a public ball. What possible pleasure he was going to get out of standing against the wall and watching her dance with other men he could not conceive. He assured himself that he was acting like a fool, and that if he kept on at the pace he was going, Heaven only knew what folly he might commit in the four days that must pass before he reached Hong-Kong.

Hong-Kong! The word had but one association for him. It was the home of his eldest and most conservative sister, a lady of uncompromising social standards, who recognized only two circles of society, the one over which her mother presided in London, and the smaller one over which she reigned as the wife of the British diplomatic official in the land of her adoption.

At the mere thought of presenting Bobby to this paragon of social perfection, Percival shuddered. He could imagine Sister Cordelia's pitiless survey of the girl through her lorgnette, the lifting of her brows over some mortal sin against taste or some deadly transgression in her manner of speech. Of course, he assured himself it would never do; the idea of bringing them together was wholly preposterous. And yet—

A Chinese youth, with a handful of trinkets, slipped into the room, and furtively proffered his wares.

"Very good, number-one jade-stone. Make missy velly plitty. Can buy?"

Percival motioned him away, only to have him return.

"Jade-stone velly nice! Plitty young missy wanchee jade-stone."

"Did she say she wanted it?" demanded Percival, with sudden interest.

The boy grinned. "Oh, yes. Wanchee heap! No have got fifty dollar'. Master have got. Wanchee buy?"

Percival tossed him the money and lay the pendant on the table. Then he resumed his pacing and his disturbed meditations. If he could only keep himself firmly in hand during those next four days, all would be well. Once safely anchored in the harbor of his sister's eminently proper English circle, the song of the siren would doubtless fade away, and he would thank Heaven fervently for his miraculous escape. Meanwhile he listened with increasing impatience for the first flutter of the siren's wings,

"Wanchee Manchu coatt?" whispered an insidious voice at his elbow, and, looking down, he saw the enterprising lad with a pile of gorgeous silks over his arm and cupidity writ large in his narrow eyes.



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"No, no; go away!" commanded Percival.

"Velly fine dragon coat. Him all same b'long mandarin. How much?"

Percival turned away, but at every step was presented with another garment for inspection. Despite himself, his artistic eye was caught and held by the beauty of the fabrics.

"How much?" he asked, picking up a marvelous affair of silver and gray, lined with the faintest of shell pinks. It was the exact tone and sheen to set Bobby's beauty off to the greatest advantage. The argument over the price was short and fierce, and Percival laid the coat beside the pendant on the table.

He promised himself to offset the effect of these gifts by a more detached and impersonal manner than he had shown Bobby during the day. So far, he congratulated himself, he had given her no occasion for false hopes. On the contrary, he had gone out of his way on several occasions to express his bitter disapproval of international marriages. When the hour came for them to part, his heart might be mortally wounded, but his conscience, save for a few scratches, would be uninjured.

A quick step in the corridor made him look up. Standing in the doorway was a vision of girlish beauty that had the acrobatic effect of sending his blood into his head and his heart into his eyes. She wore the diaphanous gown of white that he liked best, her hair was coiled at the exact angle he had prescribed, and at her belt were the orchids he had sent up half an hour before. No rhinestones in her hair, no gold beads on her slippers, nothing to mar the simplicity that her all too vivid beauty required. Percival's eyes appraised her at her full value. Even Sister Cordelia would have been propitiated by the sight.

"What's this lovely thing?" cried Bobby, pouncing upon the coat.

"Something I bought to be rid of a troublesome lad. Don't know what I shall do with it, exactly."

"Take it to your sister, of course,"

"She probably has heaps of them."

Bobby slipped her round, bare arms into the loose sleeves, and surveyed herself in the long mirror.

"Isn't that the prettiest thing you ever saw?" she asked, glancing at him over her shoulder.

[Illustration: "Isn't that the prettiest thing you ever saw?" she asked, glancing at him over her shoulder]

"It is," said Percival, emphatically. His judgment about the becomingness of the color had, as usual, been unerring.

"I should be no end grateful," he said, "if you'd take it off my hands. My trunks are fearfully stuffed now."

"But I haven't any money," said Bobby, with characteristic frankness; "besides, we don't need things like that in Cheyenne."

"Silly girl! Do you think I have turned merchant, and have got wares for sale? The coat is for you."

Bobby gave a cry of delight, then she looked up dubiously.

"But is it all right for me to take a present like this? I never had anything so big given me—yes, I did, too!" She laughed. "A fellow from Medicine Bow sent me a barrel of mixed fruit once, with nuts and raisins in between, and ten pounds of candy on top!"



## Page 60

"Then why scruple at my gift?"

Her brow clouded. "But you said girls oughtn't to take things from men they weren't engaged to. You remember that day on deck you got me to give back Andy's scarf-pin?"

Percival cleared his throat.

"Quite a different matter," he said; "now, between you and me—"

Bobby shook her head as she took off the coat.

"No, I guess not. I want it so bad I can taste it, but I think you'd better keep it for somebody in the family."

Percival slipped the jade pendant into his waistcoat pocket, and tossed the coat on a chair.

"As you like," he said. "Shall we go to the ball-room?"

In his secret soul he was inordinately gratified. Of course she should not have accepted the coat, and he should not have tempted her. She had done exactly right in firmly adhering to his former instructions. Altogether she was a remarkable little person indeed.

The moment they appeared in the ballroom she was confiscated, and he had a miserable quarter of an hour watching her whirl from one masculine arm to another. For the first time dancing struck him as pernicious. He declared that the clergy had something on its side when it denounced the amusement as evil. He doubted gravely if he should ever permit a wife of his to dance.

"Mr. Hascombe, aren't you going to ask me to dance?" It was Bobby who had stopped before him, flushed and breathless.

"I don't dance at public balls," he said disapprovingly.

"Why not?" asked Bobby, in surprise.

"Hardly the thing. A person in my position, you know—"

"You mean because of the Honorable? How stupid! Let's pretend you aren't one just for to-night!"

"But I don't dance these dances, you see."

“That doesn’t matter; I’ll teach you.”

“Really, now, I can’t make a spectacle of myself.”

“Nobody wants you to. We’ll practise out here in the loggia. Come ahead!”

He was seized by two small, determined hands and drawn this way and that, apparently without the slightest method.

“But I haven’t the vaguest idea what to do with my feet,” he protested helplessly.

“Don’t do anything with them; let them do something with you. Shut your eyes and listen to the music; let it get into your bones, and the first thing you know you will be doing it.”

With British solemnity Percival closed his eyes and tried to feel the music. Suddenly he was aware that he was moving in rhythm to the insistent beat of the drum.

“That’s it!” cried Bobby, excitedly. “You are doing the Grape-Vine; let yourself go. That’s it!”

So intent was he upon keeping out of time instead of in it, that he was guided from the loggia into the ball-room before he knew it. His awakening came when a firm hand was laid upon his shoulder. He stopped indignantly. The ship’s doctor had not only arrested the development of his new-found talent, but was actually dancing off with his partner!

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"Most unwarrantable impertinence!" he stormed to the Scotchman, whom he joined at the door. "Clapped me on the shoulder quite as if I had been under suspicion for felony. Almost expected to hear him say, 'My man, you're wanted.' I shall demand satisfaction of the cub the instant the dance is over."

The Scotchman laughed. "He meant ye no harm. It's a trick they have in the States of changing partners. Watch the game; ye'll see."

"And I can take any man's partner away by simply laying my hand on his shoulder?"

This changed the complexion of things considerably. The Honorable Percival spent the remainder of the evening laying his hand upon the shoulder of whosoever claimed Bobby for a dance.

It was remarkable with what facility he acquired the new steps. He knew that he had a good figure and that he carried it with distinction. The admiring glances that followed his entrance into any public assembly made him pleasantly aware of the fact. To-night, however, if any of his thoughts turned upon himself, they were but stragglers from the main army that marched in solid file under Bobby's banner.

During the intervals when he could not dance with her he retired to the loggia, and thought about her. She was not only the most beautiful creature he had ever seen, but the most adorably responsive. He likened her poetically to an AEolian harp and himself to the wind.

No one, not even his fond mother, had accepted him so implicitly at his own valuation as Bobby. Other women frequently insisted upon their own interpretations. He looked upon this as a form of disloyalty. Lady Hortense had once decried his taste for Tennyson; that, and her persistent use of a perfume which he disliked had been symbolic to him of a difference in temperament. Bobby had no predilections for perfumes or poets. She blindly accepted his judgment of all things, and if she sometimes failed to conform to his wishes, it was through forgetfulness and not opposition. He gloried in her plasticity; after all, was it not among the chief of feminine virtues?

While he paced the loggia and thus recounted her charms, he became increasingly intolerant of the fact that his AEolian harp was being swept by *various* winds. He thirsted for a complete monopoly of her smiles, of all her glances, grave and gay, of the thousand and one little looks and gestures that he had quite unwarrantably come to look upon as his own.

After all, why should he consider his family before himself? Why should he ever go back to England at all? It was the most daring thought he had ever had, and for a moment it staggered him. Lines from "Locksley Hall" began ringing in his ears:

“... Oh for some retreat  
Deep in yonder shining-Orient when; my life began to heat:  
Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,  
Breadths of tropic shady, and palms in clusters, Knots of Paradise.  
There the passions, cramp'd no longer, shall have scope and breathing  
space;  
I will take some savage woman—”

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Of course, he told himself, Bobby wasn't exactly a savage woman; but then again she was, you know, in a way. She was from the point of view of Sister Cordelia. But why consult Sister Cordelia at all? Why not seek some "blossomed bower in dark purple spheres of sea"? Not in China; it was too beastly smelly. Not in Japan; mosquitos. Not in America; never! It should be some South Sea Island, where they would dwell, "the world forgetting, and by the world forgot."

Once an Englishman slips the leash of his sentiment and quotes even a line of poetry, it carries him far afield. In this case it led Percival a headlong chase over walls of tradition and barriers of pride. He begrudged every moment that must elapse before he had Bobby to himself, and told her of his great decision.

"But isn't it too late to be taking a walk?" she protested when the last dance was over, and he was urging a turn on the bund.

"Just a breath of fresh air. Won't take five minutes. Where's your wrap?"

"I haven't any but my steamer-coat. I don't suppose you could stand that."

"You will wear the Manchu coat," said Percival, with tender authority; "there's every reason why you should."

## XIII

### PERCIVAL PROCRASTINATES

The little park that stretched between the bund and the water-front way deserted save for a few isolated couples who had strolled out from the hotel to cool off after the heat of the ball-room. Percival and Bobby found a vine-clad summer-house where they could watch the tall ships riding at anchor in the bay, their riding-lights swaying amid the more stationary stars. Closer to the water were the bobbing lights of the sleeping junks, while behind them twinkled the myriad lights of that vast native city the hem of whose garment they were merely touching.

The setting was all that Percival's fastidious taste could desire, but now that he had "the time and the place and the loved one all together," he found an epicure's delight in lingering over his rapture. This hour had a flavor, a bouquet, that no other hour would ever contain, and he preferred to sip it deliriously moment by moment. He coaxed her to talk at length about himself, to put into her own words the impressions he had made upon her mentally, morally, and physically. He never tired of beholding in the mirror of her mind the very images he had placed before it.

"You are a perfect little wizard!" he exclaimed in ecstasy. "You read me like a book. Quite sure you aren't cold!"

“No,” said Bobby; “but I’m getting awfully sleepy.”

His pride took instant alarm. After all, it was not the hour to press his suit. He rose, and tenderly drew the shining folds of her wrap about her.

“I shall take you in. Can’t allow you to lose your roses, you know. To-morrow I must take better care of you.”



## Page 63

Bobby gave a sleepy little laugh.

"What is it!" he asked.

"I was just thinking how mad we are making the captain. He wouldn't speak to me all through dinner."

"I shall have a word to say to the captain to-morrow that will quite change his attitude."

"What sort of a word?"

"Can't you guess?"

Before Bobby could answer, their attention was arrested by angry shouts in the street behind them. A drunken sailor, evidently from an English gunboat, was in fierce altercation with his jinrikisha-man, and was announcing to the world, in language compounded of all the oaths in his vocabulary, that he wished to be condemned to Hades if any more pumpkin-headed, pig-tailed Chinks got another bob out of his pocket.

Percival was for hurrying his precious charge past the belligerents and into the hotel, but Bobby insisted upon seeing the end of it.

"That sailor is fixing to get into trouble," she cried. "He doesn't know what he is doing or saying."

"I dare say he'll manage very well," said Percival, urging her on.

"But he *isn't* managing, He's making the coolie furious. Don't let him hit at him like that! See, he's caught hold of his queue!"

The patient Chinaman had received the supreme insult, and in a second he had flashed a short knife from his belt, and was lunging at the stupid, upturned face of the half-recumbent sailor.

Percival sprang forward and seized the descending arm. He was not quick enough to arrest the force of the blow, but he succeeded in deflecting its course, and the blade, which would have given the sailor a decent burial at sea, sharply grazed Percival's wrist, and buried itself in the side of the jinrikisha.

It was all so quickly done that by the time a crowd collected and the big Sikh policeman arrived in his yellow clothes and huge striped turban Percival had got Bobby safely into the hotel lobby. He was exasperated beyond measure that this very evening, of all, should have ended in his participation in a vulgar street brawl. So far he had succeeded in keeping Bobby from knowing that he was wounded, but the beastly

scratch was bleeding furiously, and he had to keep his hand behind, him to prevent her from seeing it.

They hurried through the empty lobby and down the long corridor that led to the elevator. Bobby was full of excitement over the recent adventure and the part Percival had played in it.

“My, but you were quick!” she said as they went up on the elevator. “I had just time to shut my eyes and open them again, and it was all over.”

“Nothing to speak of,” said Percival, twisting his handkerchief tighter around his throbbing wrist.

“But you don’t mind my being proud of you, do you?” asked Bobby as the elevator stopped at his floor. “When I see a man show courage like that, I just feel as if—as if I’d like to squeeze him.”

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Percival's left hand shot out and caught hers to his lips.

"Why, Mr. Hascombe!" she cried "What's the matter with your arm? No, I mean the other one."

"A mere scratch."

"But your sleeve's cut, and the handkerchief is all blood-stained. Why didn't you tell me you were hurt?"

"I assure you it is nothing. Quite all right in the morning. Breakfast with you at nine. Happy dreams!"

Bobby was not to be so easily put off. She insisted upon following him out of the elevator and inspecting the wound,

"Why, it's dreadful!" she cried. "And it must have been bleeding like this for five minutes! Quick! Where's your room?"

"But really, my dear girl, I can't allow this. You must get back into the lift straight away and go up to your room."

"I sha'n't do anything of the sort until you get Judson or a doctor or somebody."

Percival would have carried his point but for a certain dizziness that had come over him. He put out a hand to steady himself.

"Give me your key!" he heard Bobby saying, and the next instant his door was flung open, the lights were switched on, and he was staggering blindly toward the couch at the foot of the bed. Then there was a furious ringing of bells, a long wait, followed by the appearance of a sleepy Chinese night watchman.

"Gentleman hurt!" cried Bobby. "Get a doctor! Send somebody up here quick! Do you understand?"

"Me savvy," said the Chinaman, calmly. "Doctor no belong Astor Hotel. All same belong Oriental Hotel."

"I don't care where he belongs," Bobby cried impatiently. "Get him over the telephone. And send somebody up from the office, do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, me savvy," he said, with the imperturbability of his race.

Percival heard the man's footsteps dying in the distance, and he made a mighty effort to rouse himself.

“Silly of me to behave like this. Quite all right now, thanks. You must run away before any one comes.”

“Why?” demanded Bobby.

“Looks rather queer your being here like this at midnight, you know. Wouldn’t compromise you for the world.”

Bobby was standing at his dressing-table searching for something, and she wheeled upon him indignantly.

“This is no time to be thinking about looks. You lie down and stop talking. Hold your arm up straight, like that. Keep it that way until I come.”

He did as she told him, grasping his right wrist in his left hand; but the bright-red blood continued to spurt through his fingers, showing no signs of abating.

“If I could only find a string!” cried Bobby, tossing the contents of his bag this way and that. “Here’s the strap on your toilet-case; perhaps it’ll do.”

She knelt beside the couch, and, ripping his sleeve to the elbow, hastily wrapped the leather thong twice about his forearm and slipped the strap into the buckle.

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"I've got to hurt you," she said resolutely, pulling with nervous strength.

"It's most awfully good of you," murmured Percival, wearily, setting his teeth and closing his eyes. Despite the pain, the drowsiness was getting the better of him. He felt himself sinking through space, away from the world, from himself, and, worst of all, from the tender, reassuring voice that kept whispering words of comfort in his ear.

From time to time he was aware of bellboys coming and going, and of apparently futile inquiries for Judson, for the doctor, for Mrs. Weston, for the captain. Then for a long time he was aware of nothing whatever.

A sudden sharp pain in his arm roused him, and he opened his eyes. Bobby still knelt on the floor beside him, unflinchingly holding the strap in place.

"I won't have this!" he cried, struggling to sit up. "Your lips are trembling. It's making you ill."

She laid her free hand on his shoulder.

"Please lie still! They'll be here in a minute. I thought I heard the elevator. It won't be much longer."

There was the sound of hurrying feet in the hall, and the next instant a quick rap at the door. Bobby looked up with great relief as a burly English physician bustled into the room.

"How long have you had the tourniquet on, Madam?" he asked, stripping off his gloves and falling to work.

"The what?" said Bobby.

"The strap on his arm?"

"Oh, since a quarter past twelve." She got up from her knees stiffly, and shook out the shining folds of the Manchu coat. "It was the only thing I could think of; it's what the boys do back home for a rattlesnake bite."

The doctor's glance expressed complete and unqualified approval, but whether it was for her course of action or her very lovely and disturbed appearance it would be hard to say. As she slipped out of the room he turned to Percival.

"It's a severed artery, sir; no special harm done except the loss of blood. A few days' rest—"

"But I am sailing in the morning," murmured Percival. "Must patch me up by that time."

"We shall see. You don't seem to realize that you stood an excellent chance of remaining permanently in Shanghai."

"You mean?"

"I mean that you owe your life to that plucky little wife of yours."

Percival's heart leaped at the word. "She's not my wife, Doctor," he said, smiling feebly, "not yet."

## **XIV**

### **NEPTUNE TAKES A HAND**

The evolution of a hero is seldom a gradual process; he usually springs into public favor suddenly and dramatically. Not so with the Honorable Percival. He had to scramble ignominiously on all fours through a canvas tunnel, he had to brave the smiles of the on-lookers while he learned new steps on the ball-room floor, he had to participate in a street fight and have an artery severed before he was accorded the honor of a pedestal.

## Page 66

Bobby's graphic account of his defense of the drunken sailor, together with his own vigorous disavowal of any heroism in the affair, won for him a halo. After months of tedious anchorage in the dull harbor of seclusion, he found himself once more afloat on a sea of approval, tasting again the sweet savor of adulation, and spreading his sails to catch each passing breath of admiration.

Reclining in his deck-chair, with his arm in a sling and a becoming pallor suffusing his classic features, he became an object of the greatest solicitude to his fellow-passengers. The fluttering attentions he received warmed him into geniality, and in return he dispensed regal favors. He allowed Mrs. Weston to consult him concerning her presentation at court the following spring, he let Andy Black arrange his tie, and permitted Elise Weston to cut the leaves of his magazine. He graciously submitted to endless inquiries concerning his hourly progress, and even went so far as to accept two cream peppermints from the old missionary, who had acquired a new box.

The only drawback to this feast of brotherly love lay in the fact that he could not obtain the tete-a-tete he so earnestly desired with Bobby Boynton. She was always with him, to be sure, but so was everybody else, especially Mrs. Weston, who had been officially appointed to stand guard over the situation.

The captain had been stung to active measure by a chance remark of Andy Black's when they were alone at breakfast.

"Accept my condolences," that youth had lugubriously remarked. "You have missed the chance of your young life."

"How's that?" asked the captain.

"By not getting me for a son-in-law. Miss Bobby broke the news to me at the dance last night."

"Did she give you a reason?" asked the captain, arresting his cup in mid-air.

"I didn't need one. I've been rooming with it ever since we left Honolulu."

"She didn't say it was—"

"Oh, she as good as told me. Same old chestnut I've been handed out all my life. Said she cared for somebody else, but that she'd never forget me. I can't see much satisfaction in occupying a pigeon-hole in a girl's heart when, another fellow's got the key to it."

The captain, was concerned with something far more serious than Andy's matrimonial failures.

“What makes you think it's Hascombe?” he asked.

“What makes everybody think so?” asked Andy. “What makes him think so himself?”

The captain lost no time in finding Mrs. Weston, and laying the case before her.

“He's got to be headed off,” he said anxiously. “It 's getting serious.”

“It certainly looks so after yesterday and last night. But I can't for the life of me see why you oppose it. He's really a tremendous catch, and it's no wonder Bobby's head is turned. We are all a bit daft over him since he condescended to notice us.”





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"Suffering Moses!" exploded the captain. "Let any fool come along and shed a few drops of blood, then kiss his hand to the grand stand, and he's got the women at his feet! I thought Bobby had more sense than to cotton to that gilded rooster. I've a good mind to lock her up in her stateroom until we reach Hong-Kong."

Mrs. Weston shook her head and smiled.

"You can't manage her that way. She is the sweetest thing that ever was, but she is the kind of girl that can't be forced."

"Well, she shall be!" cried the captain, with savage determination. "I headed her off once, and I'll do it again. I tell you, I'd rather see her dead than married to an Englishman."

"Why, Captain Boynton!"

"I would. It's the Lord's truth. Her mother before her got caught by just such a high-headed British fool. She was welcome to him, and he to her, though Heaven knows she paid for it. If I thought my girl was going the same way—"

His square jaw quivered suddenly, and he turned away abruptly.

Mrs. Weston was wise enough to keep silent until he had mastered himself, then she said kindly:

"I don't wonder you feel as you do. You leave the matter to me, and I'll do my best to keep things in abeyance until we reach Hong-Kong. Once they are separated, the danger is practically over."

It is doubtful, however, whether the combined efforts of the captain, Mrs. Weston, and even Percival himself could have kept things *in statu quo* had a timely typhoon not arrived and taken things into its own hands. It was about four in the afternoon that the sky darkened and the bright blue water turned to gray. The wind shifted and came on to blow dead ahead.

"What a queer light there is on everything!" cried Mrs. Weston, who was dutifully stationed between Bobby and Percival, doing sentry duty. "I wonder if it is going to blow up a storm."

"I hope so," said Bobby. "I love for things to happen."

Percival glanced despairingly at Mrs. Weston, who was beginning on a fresh ball of yarn. If she continued to sit there and knit the rest of her life, nothing ever would happen.

"I ought to close my port-hole if it's going to rain," she said. "Do you think it is?"

"Sure to," said Percival, with unusual alacrity. "Hard shower any minute."

Mrs. Weston rose reluctantly.

"Don't you think you'd better come down, too, Bobby, and close yours?"

"Mine's closed, thanks. I'll take your place and hold Mr. Hascombe's tea-cup."

Now, when a person with outrageously blue eyes is leaning on the arm of your steamer-chair, steadying your saucer for you, and the wind has blown everybody else off the deck except a bow-legged Chinese steward who is absorbed in tying things down, it does look as if Fate meant to be propitious.

Percival put his cup in his saucer and let his fingers touch the small hand that held it.

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[Illustration: "It's quite worth while" he said "getting a jab in the wrist, to have you looking after me like this"]

"It's quite worth while," he said, "getting a jab in the wrist, to have you looking after me like this. I wonder if you realize that you saved my life last night?"

"I bet I know what this is leading up to," cried Bobby, accusingly.

"What?" asked Percival, catching his lip between his teeth and looking at her with devouring eyes.

"A medal!"

"Much more serious. As a matter of fact, the truth is, I've been trying to get a minute alone with you all day. There's something I want—"

"Oh, yes, I know. It's that Manchu coat. You want it to pack, of course. I'll get it now."

But his fingers held hers fast to the saucer.

"You stupid child! You don't understand. It's yours, everything I have is—"

"Oh, goody! Here's the rain!" cried Bobby. "Andy bet me ten pounds of candy it wouldn't come before night. Quick, let me put your cup under the chair. Don't bother about the cushions."

"But there's something I've *got* to say to you. You must listen to me!"

"I'll listen to anything you like in the music-room just so it isn't 'Tales from Hoffman.' Come, we'll have to hurry!"

Percival, with his passion once more arrested, strode after her furiously. He was intolerant of every moment that passed before he claimed her for his own, and unable longer to restrain his mad desire to fold her in his arms.

In the midst of these fervent anticipations he was unpleasantly aware of the increased motion of the ship. It was the first time he had felt that pitching, rolling motion since leaving the Golden Gate, and he shuddered involuntarily.

"Here's a cozy little corner all to ourselves!" cried Bobby, tossing the cushions into a nook in the music-room, and inviting him to a place beside her.

But Percival remained standing in the doorway, supporting himself with his free hand, his eyes fixed on space, and a leaden color spreading over his face.

"If you don't mind," he said slowly, "I think I'll go below. Feel the storm a bit in my head. Atmospheric pressure, you know."

"Of course you do," cried Bobby, all solicitude. "It's no wonder, after the blood you lost last night. Sit right down there until I find Judson."

## **XV**

### **PERCIVAL RISES TO AN OCCASION**

During the two nights and days that followed the typhoon had everything its own way. The sea bellowed with rage, and battalion after battalion of mountainous waves charged the ship, only to fall back and form again. For thirty consecutive hours the captain stayed on the bridge watching every variation in the glass, and keeping all of his Nelson features in active service. Whatever frivolities might fill his idle hours, there was no question of his attention to duty when the call came.

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As for the Honorable Percival, he had ample opportunity during his long hours of solitary confinement to make a complete inventory of his varied emotions. Two things which should never be interrupted are a sneeze and a proposal. That second declaration, so ardently begun and so ruthlessly arrested, still hung in mid-air, and lying on his back in his darkened stateroom, he had ample time in which to survey it from every angle.

Never for a moment did he question the undying nature of his affection for Bobby. His emotion was too insistent and too consuming to be doubted. It was the proprieties that he questioned, and they all shook emphatic and disapproving heads. The proprieties in Grosvenor Square, to be sure, loomed rather dim through the distance; but that immediate propriety in Hong-Kong, toward whom he was speeding with every turn of the screw, towered ominously.

If only he could hold things in abeyance until after the *Saluria* sailed from Hong-Kong, all might be well. It was of the utmost importance that he should not present Bobby to Sister Cordelia until the die was irrevocably cast. Faults that in Miss Boynton of the Big Gully Ranch would be glaring iniquities would, in the wife of the Honorable Percival Hascombe, dwindle away to charming eccentricities.

A daring plan occurred to him. With proper strategy he might go down to see the steamer off, get left on board, have the return trip in uninterrupted bliss with Bobby, then boldly cable from America that he had met his fate and succumbed to it, and that remonstrances were useless. The scheme appealed to him the more he considered it. Cablegrams were necessarily unemotional, and by the time letters were exchanged, the proprieties would probably have decided to accept the will of Providence and try to make the best of dear Percy's strange choice of an unknown American girl.

In the meanwhile he would devote all his energies to fitting her for the honor about to be conferred upon her, For he had quite given up the idea of the "blossomed bower in dark purple spheres of sea," and had definitely decided to take her back to England as the future mistress of Hascombe Hall. All he asked was six months in which to cut and polish his priceless gem.

It was not until the evening before the *Saluria* was due in Hong-Kong that the sea got over its fit of temper and decided to make that last night the most beautiful one of the crossing. Everybody was down for the farewell dinner. Even those who had been invisible for two days emerged from their state-rooms like gorgeous butterflies from their cocoons. Speeches were made, toasts were drunk, and a general air of festivity prevailed.

Percival raged inwardly at the length of the dinner. The golden moments were racing by, and he was in a fever to get Bobby away to himself, he had decided on a course which he felt did credit to his power of self-control. He would permit himself the luxury of showing her that her affection for him was wholly returned, without in any way

committing himself to a definite engagement. He would, in short, ask her to accept a sort of promissory note on his affections, to be presented at any time after the steamer left Hong-Kong.

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It was ten o'clock before he contrived, to escape Mrs. Weston's vigilant eye and whisk Bobby off to a certain favored nook on the boat-deck just outside the captain's state-room. Here they had spent many happy evenings, notwithstanding the fact that their figures, silhouetted against the light, had never failed to provoke the captain to a profanity that was not always inaudible.

To-night, however, the captain was detained below, and they had the entire Yellow Sea to themselves as they sat on a projecting ledge and leaned their elbows comfortably on the rail.

It was an enticing night, with nothing left of the recent storm save a subtle thrill that still lingered in wind and wave. Overhead spread a canopy of luminous, subtropical stars; in undisturbed silence they gazed up at their brilliance. From below floated faint strains of music mingling with the sound of rippling: water.

"And to think it's our very last night!" murmured Bobby, her chin on her palm. "I'll never bear 'La Paloma' that I sha'n't think of this trip and of you."

Percival dared not answer. He had reached that stage when, according to the philosopher, the moonlight is a pleasing fever, the stars are letters, the flowers ciphers, and the air is coined into song. He regarded her gaze as she bent it upon the stars as the most exquisitely pensive thing he had ever behold.

"My! but there are some dandy billiard-shots up there!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Do you see that lovely carom over there beyond the Dipper?"

"I am not thinking of caroms," he said impatiently, "I am thinking of you."

"What have I done now?" she asked indignantly.

"You've made me forget that there's anything else in the whole universe but just you!"

"And now you've got to begin to remember," said Bobby, sympathetically.

He searched her face for a clue as to what was passing in her mind, but he found none.

"You are a most awfully baffling girl," he said. "Sometimes I can't determine whether you are subtle or merely ingenuous."

"I'd give it up," advised Bobby.

"But I sha'n't give it up. I sha'n't be content until I know every little corner of your mind and heart."

She stirred uneasily. From, the way he was looking at her it was evidently a good thing that his near arm was in a sling.

“You need a cigar,” she said soothingly. “Get one out; I’ll light it for you.”

He obediently produced his cigar-case, and together they selected a cigar. She made a great point of cutting off the end, and then, when he had got it into his mouth, she struck a match and, sheltering the blaze with her scarf, held it close. The sudden intimacy of that beautiful face in the little circle of light, with the darkness all around, was quite too much for Percival. He looked straight into her eyes for one resolution-breaking second, then he blew out the match and catching her to him, passionately kissed those smiling, upturned lips.



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"Mr. Hascombe!" she protested, shrinking away; but Percival had made his leap and nothing could stop him.

"You are mine!" he cried rapturously, pressing her hand again and again to his lips. "It's all quite right, my darling. Don't be frightened. We shall be married any time, anywhere you say, to-morrow, if you like, in Hong-Kong."

"But, Mr. Hascombe—"

"Not Mr. Hascombe. Percival, Percy, if you will. Fancy! Love at first sight. One glance on those desolate plains, and you were mine!"

"But I'm not. That's what I'm trying to tell you."

He looked at her fatuously. "But you will be! My little lady of the manor! My beautiful little mistress of Hascombe Hall!"

She struggled away from him, and stood at bay.

"How *can* you talk to me like this?" she cried, her voice trembling with indignation, "after what I told you that day in the wind-shelter?"

"In the wind-shelter?" He looked at her in bewilderment.

"Yea, about Hal Ford and the captain and all that. Why, you promised to help me, and now—"

"Hal Ford?" repeated Percival, dazed. "What has he to do with it?"

"More than anybody else in the world. He's waiting for me in Wyoming, and I'm counting the days and the hours and the minutes until I get back to him. I thought you understood, and were helping me bring the captain around."

He stood before her too stunned to speak.

Sheer amazement for the moment crowded out the pain.

"But—but don't you love me?" he stammered at last.

"Of course I don't," said Bobby, almost indignantly; "I never have loved anybody, and I never will love anybody but Hal."

Then Percival realized that it was quite possible for lightning to strike twice in the same place. He felt a sudden pain in his throat, a burning under his lids, and he sat down limply.

[Illustration: “I’m so sorry!” whispered Bobby, putting her arm impulsively around his heaving shoulders]

“I’m so sorry!” whispered Bobby, putting her arm impulsively around his heaving shoulders. “I thought we were playing a game. I thought you understood. Please forgive me, Mr. Hascombe! Please! Won’t you?”

He shook off her arm and stood up. He was whiter than he had been on the night of the accident, but he managed to achieve a smile.

“Nothing whatever to forgive, I assure you. Just a bit of a bunker, you know. Silly ass I was, not to have seen it all along. May I offer my congratulations?” he added.

She took the hand that he hold out, and for a longer time than either of them knew they stood silent, looking out into the vast mystery of the night, while the throbbing strains of “La Paloma” floated up from below, mingling with the music of the rippling water.

“I guess this is good-by,” said Bobby, tremulously.

Then it was that the Honorable Percival illustrated the fact that an English gentleman is often greatest in defeat.

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"Not necessarily," he said gamely. "Quite possible you and your husband may come to England."

"Or you to Wyoming!" cried Bobby, brightening instantly, and turning upon him the full splendor of her eyes. "Hal and I'd just *love* to give you a summer on the ranch. Do you suppose it ever will be possible?"

"Oh, I dare say," said the Honorable Percival, nonchalantly adjusting his monocle.

## XVI

### IN PORT

The next morning the long voyage of the *Saluria* came to an end. The steamer docked at Hong-Kong just as the first pink streaks of dawn crept over the bay and the terraced city.

Bobby was up with the officers, and breakfasted alone with the captain.

"Can you spare me five minutes?" she asked as he was hurrying through his second cup of coffee.

"What for?"

"For a talk. I've got something to tell you."

"It'll have to wait," said the captain, gruffly. "We are landing a cargo of sugar machinery here, and I've got my hands full."

"I don't want your hands," said Bobby, quietly; "I want your ears. There's something I've just got to tell you."

"I can't listen. I'm due on the bridge now."

He escaped for the time being, but later in the morning, when the commotion of arrival was at its height, and the passengers were beginning to go ashore, he found Bobby on the bridge beside him. He fancied he saw defiance written all over her, from the crown of her white hat to the tip of her white shoes.

"Captain," she said, "It won't take a minute."

He was on the point of refusing when she laid her hand on his.

"Cut away!" he said, looking straight ahead of him. "Make it short."



"It's about Mr. Hascombe. He's—he's asked me to marry him."

The captain jerked his hand away and brought it down on the rail with a resounding blow.

"You sha'n't do it!" he thundered. "I'd see you sewed up in a bag and dropped alongside first."

"But, Captain—"

"I won't have it! There's no use arguing. The idea of a girl of mine being carried away by a condescending, conceited jack-in-the-box—"

"He *isn't*! He's a darling!" Bobby flashed out hotly. "It's just that you don't understand him."

"What's more, I don't want to. I've had enough of him and his kind. If I'd known you were going to run amuck of a thing like this, I'd have let you bury yourself on the ranch for the rest of your life."

"Well," agreed Bobby, carefully studying her pink palm, and weighing her words as one who is quite open to reason, "I think I could have been happy with Hal; but you thought we were both too young and that I ought to see some other men first."

"Yes, but I didn't know you were going to get your head turned by the first fool that came lording it around with a valet and a title. The Fords may be plain people, but, by Jugs! they are the sort to tie up to in a squall."

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Bobby smiled broadly under the brim of her hat.

"Then you advise me to take Hal?"

"I advise you to let me send this fellow Hascombe about his business. I'll make short work of him."

Bobby slipped her arm through his, and looked up saucily.

"You needn't bother, dear," she said. "Now that it's all settled about Hal, I don't mind telling you that I refused Mr. Hascombe last night."

\* \* \* \* \*

On the gangway below, the passengers were slowly filing ashore. Among the last to debark was the Honorable Percival Hascombe, followed by a fur coat, a gun-case, two pigskin bags, a hat-box, and a valet. On his face was an expression of unutterable ennui. As he reached the wharf he turned and casually surveyed the steamer. On the bridge he discerned a small alert figure, clad in white, her dark head framed by the broad brim of a Panama hat. She waved her hand and smiled, and he waved back, but he did not smile.

"Judson," said the Honorable Percival as they handed their bags to Sister Cordelia's footman, "quite unnecessary to mention any—er—any incidents of the voyage. You understand?"

"Quite so, sir," said Judson.

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\* \* \* \* \*

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