

Celebrity, the — Volume 04 eBook

Celebrity, the — Volume 04 by Winston Churchill

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CHAPTER XV

I am convinced that Mr. Cooke possessed at least some of the qualities of a great general. In certain campaigns of past centuries, and even of this, it has been hero-worship that impelled the rank and file rather than any high sympathy with the cause they were striving for. And so it was with us that morning. Our commander was everywhere at once, encouraging us to work, and holding over us in impressive language the awful alternative of capture. For he had the art, in a high degree, of inoculating his followers with the spirit which animated him; and shortly, to my great surprise, I found myself working as though my life depended on it. I certainly did not care very much whether the Celebrity was captured or not, and yet, with the prospect of getting him over the border, I had not thought of breakfast. Farrar had a natural inclination for work of this sort, but even he was infused somewhat with the contagious haste and enthusiasm which filled the air; and together we folded the tents with astonishing despatch and rowed them out to the Maria, Mr. Cooke having gone to his knees in the water to shove the boat off.

“What are we doing this for?” said Farrar to me, as we hoisted the sail.

We both laughed.

“I have just been asking myself that question,” I replied.

“You are a nice district attorney, Crocker,” he said. “You have made a most proper and equitable decision in giving your consent to Allen’s escape. Doesn’t your conscience smart?”

“Not unbearably. I’ll tell you what, Farrar,” said I, “the truth is, that this fellow never embezzled so much as a ten-cent piece. He isn’t guilty: he isn’t the man.”

“Isn’t the man?” repeated Farrar.

“No,” I answered; “it’s a long tale, and no time to tell it now. But he is really, as he claims to be, the author of all those detestable books we have been hearing so much of.”

“The deuce he is!” exclaimed Farrar, dropping the stopper he was tying. “Did he write *The Sybarites*?”

“Yes, sir; he wrote *The Sybarites*, and all the rest of that trash.”

“He’s the fellow that maintains a man ought to marry a girl after he has become engaged to her.”



“Exactly,” I said, smiling at his way of putting it.

“Preaches constancy to all men, but doesn’t object to stealing.”

I laughed.

“You’re badly mixed,” I explained. “I told you he never stole anything. He was only ass enough to take the man’s name who is the living image of him. And the other man took the bonds.”

“Oh, come now,” said he, “tell me something improbable while you are about it.”

“It’s true,” I replied, repressing my mirth; “true as the tale of Timothy. I knew him when he was a mere boy. But I don’t give you that as a proof, for he might have become all things to all men since. Ask Miss Trevor; or Miss Thorn; she knows the other man, the bicycle man, and has seen them both together.”



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"Where, in India? Was one standing on the ground looking at his double go to heaven? Or was it at one of those drawing-room shows where a medium holds conversation with your soul, while your body sleeps on the lounge? By George, Crocker, I thought you were a sensible man."

No wonder I got angry. But I might have come at some proper estimation of Farrar's incredulity by that time.

"I suppose you wouldn't take a lady's word," I growled.

"Not for that," he said, busy again with the sail stops; "nor St. Chrysostom's, were he to come here and vouch for it. It is too damned improbable."

"Stranger things than that have happened," I retorted, fuming.

"Not to any of us," he said. Presently he added, chuckling: "He'd better not get into the clutches of that man Drew."

"What do you mean?" I demanded. Farrar was exasperating at times.

"Drew will wind those handcuffs on him like tourniquets," he laughed.

There seemed to be something behind this remark, but before I could inquire into it we were interrupted by Mr. Cooke, who was standing on the beach, swearing and gesticulating for the boat.

"I trust," said Farrar, as we rowed ashore, "that this blind excitement will continue, and that we shall have the extreme pleasure of setting down our friend in Her Majesty's dominions with a yachting-suit and a ham sandwich."

We sat down to a hasty breakfast, in the middle of which the Celebrity arrived. His appearance was unexceptionable, but his heavy jaw was set in a manner which should have warned Mr. Cooke not to trifle with him.

"Sit down, old man, and take a bite before we start for Canada," said my client.

The Celebrity walked up to him.

"Mr. Cooke," he began in a menacing tone, "it is high time this nonsense was ended. I am tired of being made a buffoon of for your party. For your gratification I have spent a sleepless night in those cold, damp woods; and I warn you that practical joking can be carried too far. I will not go to Canada, and I insist that you sail me back to Asquith."

Mr. Cooke winked significantly in our direction and tapped his head.



“I don’t wonder you’re a little upset, old man,” he said, humoringly patting him; “but sit down for a bite of something, and you’ll see things differently.”

“I’ve had my breakfast,” he said, taking out a cigarette.

Then Mr. Trevor got up.

“He demands, sir, to be delivered over to the authorities,” said he, “and you have no right to refuse him. I protest strongly.”

“And you can protest all you damn please,” retorted my client; “this isn’t the Ohio State Senate. Do you know where I would put you, Mr. Trevor? Do you know where you ought to be? In a hencoop, sir, if I had one here. In a hen-coop. What would you do if a man who had gone a little out of his mind asked you for a gun to shoot himself with? Give it him, I suppose. But I put Mr. Allen ashore in Canada, with the funds to get off with, and then my duty’s done.”



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This speech, as Mr. Cooke had no doubt confidently hoped, threw the senator into a frenzy of wrath.

“The day will come, sir,” he shouted, shaking his fist at my client, “the day will come when you will rue this bitterly.”

“Don’t get off any of your oratorical frills on me,” replied Mr. Cooke, contemptuously; “you ought to be tied and muzzled.”

Mr. Trevor was white with anger.

“I, for one, will not go to Canada,” he cried.

“You’ll stay here and starve, then,” said Mr. Cooke; “damned little I care.”

Mr. Trevor turned to Farrar, who was biting his lip.

“Mr. Farrar, I know you to be a rising young man of sound principles, and Mr. Crocker likewise. You are the only ones who can sail. Have you reflected that you are about to ruin your careers?”

“We are prepared to take the chances, I think,” said Farrar.

Mr. Cooke looked us over, proudly and gratefully, as much as to say that while he lived we should not lack the necessities of life.

At nine we embarked, the Celebrity and Mr. Trevor for the same reason that the animals took to the ark,—because they had to. There was a spanking breeze in the west-northwest, and a clear sky, a day of days for a sail. Mr. Cooke produced a map, which Farrar and I consulted, and without much trouble we hit upon a quiet place to land on the Canadian side. Our course was north-northwest, and therefore the wind enabled us to hold it without much trouble. Bear Island is situated some eighteen miles from shore, and about equidistant between Asquith and Far Harbor, which latter we had to pass on our way northward.

Although a brisk sea was on, the wind had been steady from that quarter all night, and the motion was uniform. The Maria was an excellent sea-boat. There was no indication, therefore, of the return of that malady which had been so prevalent on the passage to Bear Island. Mr. Cooke had never felt better, and looked every inch a sea-captain in his natty yachting-suit. He had acquired a tan on the island; and, as is eminently proper on a boat, he affected nautical manners and nautical ways. But his vernacular savored so hopelessly of the track and stall that he had been able to acquire no mastery over the art of marine invective. And he possessed not so much as one maritime oath. As soon as we had swung clear of the cove he made for the weather stays, where he assumed a posture not unlike that in the famous picture of Farragut

ascending Mobile Bay. His leather case was swung over his shoulder, and with his glasses he swept the lake in search of the Scimitar and other vessels of a like unamiable character.

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Although my client could have told you, offhand, jackstraw's last mile in a bicycle sulky, his notion of the Scimitar's speed was as vague as his knowledge of seamanship. And when I informed him that in all probability she had already passed the light on Far Harbor reef, some nine miles this side of the Far Harbor police station, he went into an inordinate state of excitement. Mr. Cooke was, indeed, that day the embodiment of an unselfish if misdirected zeal. He was following the dictates of both heart and conscience in his endeavor to rescue his guest from the law; and true zeal is invariably contagious. What but such could have commanded the unremitting labors of that morning? Farrar himself had done three men's work before breakfast, and it was, in great part, owing to him that we were now leaving the island behind us. He was sailing the Maria that day as she will never be sailed again: her lee gunwale awash, and a wake like a surveyor's line behind her. More than once I called to mind his facetious observation about Mr. Drew, and wondered if he knew more than he had said about the detective.

Once in the open, the Maria showed but small consideration for her passengers, for she went through the seas rather than over them. And Mr. Cooke, manfully keeping his station on the weather bow, likewise went through the seas. No argument could induce him to leave the post he had thus heroically chosen, which was one of honor rather than utility, for the lake was as vacant of sails as the day that Father Marquette (or some one else) first beheld it. Under such circumstances ease must be considered as only a relative term; and the accommodations of the Maria afforded but two comfortable spots,—the cabin, and the lea aft of the cabin bulkhead. This being the case, the somewhat peculiar internal relations of the party decided its grouping.

I know of no worse place than a small yacht, or than a large one for that matter, for uncongenial people. The Four betook themselves to the cabin, which was fortunately large, and made life bearable with a game of cards; while Mrs. Cooke, whose adaptability and sense I had come greatly to, admire, contented herself with a corner and a book. The ungrateful cause of the expedition himself occupied another corner. I caught sight of him through the cabin skylight, and the silver pencil he was holding over his note-book showed unmistakable marks of teeth.

Outside, Mr. Trevor, his face wearing an immutable expression of defiance for the wickedness surrounding him, had placed his daughter for safe-keeping between himself and the only other reliable character on board,—the refrigerator. But Miss Thorn appeared in a blue mackintosh and a pair of heavy yachting-boots, courting rather than avoiding a drenching. Even a mackintosh is becoming to some women. All morning she sat behind Mr. Cooke, on the rise of the cabin, her back against the mast and her hair flying in the wind, and I, for one, was not sorry the Celebrity had given us this excuse for a sail.



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CHAPTER XVI

About half-past eleven Mr. Cooke's vigilance was rewarded by a glimpse of the lighthouse on Far Harbor reef, and almost simultaneously he picked up, to the westward, the ragged outline of the house-tops and spires of the town itself. But as we neared the reef the harbor appeared as quiet as a Sunday morning: a few Mackinaws were sailing hither and thither, and the Far Harbor and Beaver-ton boat was coming out. My client, in view of the peaceful aspect affairs had assumed, presently consented to relinquish his post, and handed the glasses over to me with an injunction to be watchful.

I promised. And Mr. Cooke, feeling his way aft with more discretion than grace, finally descended into the cabin, where he was noisily received. And I was left with Miss Thorn. While my client had been there in front of us, his lively conversation and naive if profane remarks kept us in continual laughter. When with him it was utterly impossible to see any other than the ludicrous side of this madcap adventure, albeit he himself was so keenly in earnest as to its performance. It was with misgiving that I saw him disappear into the hatchway, and my impulse was to follow him. Our spirits, like those in a thermometer, are never stationary: mine were continually being sent up or down. The night before, when I had sat with Miss Thorn beside the fire, they went up; this morning her anxious solicitude for the Celebrity had sent them down again. She both puzzled and vexed me. I could not desert my post as lookout, and I remained in somewhat awkward suspense as to what she was going to say, gazing at distant objects through the glasses. Her remark, when it came, took me by surprise.

"I am afraid," she said seriously, "that Uncle Fenelon's principles are not all that they should be. His morality is something like his tobacco, which doesn't injure him particularly, but is dangerous to others."

I was more than willing to meet her on the neutral ground of Uncle Fenelon.

"Do you think his principles contagious?" I asked.

"They have not met with the opposition they deserve," she replied. "Uncle Fenelon's ideas of life are not those of other men,—yours, for instance. And his affairs, mental and material, are, happily for him, such that he can generally carry out his notions with small inconvenience. He is no doubt convinced that he is acting generously in attempting to rescue the Celebrity from a term in prison; what he does not realize is that he is acting ungenerously to other guests who have infinitely more at stake."

"But our friend from Ohio has done his best to impress this upon him," I replied, failing to perceive her drift; "and if his words are wasted, surely the thing is hopeless."

"I am not joking," said she. "I was not thinking of Mr. Trevor, but of you. I like you, Mr. Crocker. You may not believe it, but I do." For the life of me I could think of no fitting

reply to this declaration. Why was that abominable word “like” ever put into the English language? “Yes, I like you,” she continued meditatively, “in the face of the fact that you persist in disliking me.”



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“Nothing of the kind.”

“Oh, I know. You mustn’t think me so stupid as all that. It is a mortifying truth that I like you, and that you have no use for me.”

I have never known how to take a jest from a woman. I suppose I should have laughed this off. Instead, I made a fool of myself.

“I shall be as frank with you,” I said, “and declare that I like you, though I should be much happier if I didn’t.”

She blushed at this, if I am not mistaken. Perhaps it was unlooked for.

“At any rate,” she went on, “I should deem it my duty to warn you of the consequences of this joke of yours. They may not be all that you have anticipated. The consequences for you, I mean, which you do not seem to have taken into account.”

“Consequences for me!” I exclaimed.

“I fear that you will think what I am going to say uncalled for, and that I am meddling with something that does not concern me. But it seems to me that you are undervaluing the thing you have worked so hard to attain. They say that you have ability, that you have acquired a practice and a position which at your age give the highest promise for the future. That you are to be counsel for the railroad. In short, that you are the coming man in this section of the state. I have found this out,” said she, cutting short my objections, “in spite of the short time I have been here.”

“Nonsense!” I said, reddening in my turn.

“Suppose that the Celebrity is captured,” she continued, thrusting her hands into the pockets of her mackintosh. “It appears that he is shadowed, and it is not unreasonable to expect that we shall be chased before the day is over. Then we shall be caught red-handed in an attempt to get a criminal over the border. Please wait until I have finished,” she said, holding up her hand at an interruption I was about to make. “You and I know he is not a criminal; but he might as well be as far as you are concerned. As district attorney you are doubtless known to the local authorities. If the Celebrity is arrested after a long pursuit, it will avail you nothing to affirm that you knew all along he was the noted writer. You will pardon me if I say that they will not believe you then. He will be taken East for identification. And if I know anything about politics, and especially the state of affairs in local politics with which you are concerned, the incident and the interval following it will be fatal to your chances with the railroad,—to your chances in general. You perceive, Mr. Crocker, how impossible it is to play with fire without being burned.”



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I did perceive. At the time the amazing thoroughness with which she had gone into the subject of my own unimportant affairs, the astuteness and knowledge of the world she had shown, and the clearness with which she had put the situation, did not strike me. Nothing struck me but the alarming sense of my own stupidity, which was as keen as I have ever felt it. What man in a public position, however humble, has not political enemies? The image of O'Meara was wafted suddenly before me, disagreeably near, and his face wore the smile of victory. All of Mr. Cooke's money could not save me. My spirits sank as the immediate future unfolded itself, and I even read the article in O'Meara's organ, the Northern Lights, which was to be instrumental in divesting me of my public trust and fair fame generally. Yes, if the Celebrity was caught on the other side of Far Harbor, all would be up with John Crocker! But it would never do to let Miss Thorn discover my discomfiture.

"There is something in what you say," I replied, with what bravado I could muster.

"A little, I think," she returned, smiling; "now, what I wish you to do is to make Uncle Fenelon put into Far Harbor. If he refuses, you can go in in spite of him, since you and Mr. Farrar are the only ones who can sail. You have the situation in your own hands."

There was certainly wisdom in this, also. But the die was cast now, and pride alone was sufficient to hold me to the course I had rashly begun upon. Pride! What an awkward thing it is, and more difficult for most of us to swallow than a sponge.

"I thank you for this interest in my welfare, Miss Thorn," I began.

"No fine speeches, please, sir," she cut in, "but do as I advise."

"I fear I cannot."

"Why do you say that? The thing is simplicity itself."

"I should lose my self-respect as a practical joker. And besides," I said maliciously, "I started out to have some fun with the Celebrity, and I want to have it."

"Well," she replied, rather coolly, "of course you can do as you choose."

We were passing within a hundred yards of the lighthouse, set cheerlessly on the bald and sandy tip of the point. An icy silence sat between us, and such a silence is invariably insinuating. This one suggested a horrible thought. What if Miss Thorn had warned me in order to save the Celebrity from humiliation? I thrust it aside, but it returned again and grinned. Had she not practised insincerity before? And any one with half an eye could see that she was in love with the Celebrity; even the Fraction had remarked it. What more natural than, with her cleverness, she had hit upon this means of terminating the author's troubles by working upon my fears?



Human weakness often proves too much for those of us who have the very best intentions. Up to now the refrigerator and Mr. Trevor had kept the strictest and most jealous of vigils over Irene. But at length the senator succumbed to the drowsiness which never failed to attack him at this hour, and he forgot the disrepute of his surroundings in a respectable sleep. Whereupon his daughter joined us on the forecastle.



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"I knew that would happen to papa if I only waited long enough," she said. "Oh, he thinks you're dreadful, Mr. Crocker. He says that nowadays young men haven't any principle. I mustn't be seen talking to you."

"I have been trying to convince Mr. Crocker that his stand in the matter is not only immoral, but suicidal," said Miss Thorn. "Perhaps," she added meaningfully, "he will listen to you."

"I don't understand," answered Miss Trevor.

"Miss Thorn has been good enough to point out," I explained, "that the political machine in this section, which has the honor to detest me, will seize upon the pretext of the Celebrity's capture to ruin me. They will take the will for the deed."

"Of course they will do just that," cried Miss Trevor. "How bright of you to think of it, Marian!"

Miss Thorn stood up.

"I leave you to persuade him," said she; "I have no doubt you will be able to do it."

With that she left us, quite suddenly. Abruptly, I thought. And her manner seemed to impress Miss Trevor.

"I wonder what is the matter with Marian," said she, and leaned over the skylight. "Why, she has gone down to talk with the Celebrity."

"Isn't that rather natural?" I asked with asperity.

She turned to me with an amused expression.

"Her conduct seems to worry you vastly, Mr. Crocker. I noticed that you were quite upset this morning in the cave. Why was it?"

"You must have imagined it," I said stiffly.

"I should like to know," she said, with the air of one trying to solve a knotty problem, "I should like to know how many men are as blind as you."

"You are quite beyond me, Miss Trevor," I answered; "may I request you to put that remark in other words?"

"I protest that you are a most unsatisfactory person," she went on, not heeding my annoyance. "Most abnormally modest people are. If I were to stick you with this hat-pin, for instance, you would accept the matter as a positive insult."



“I certainly should,” I said, laughing; “and, besides, it would be painful.”

“There you are,” said she, exultingly; “I knew it. But I flatter myself there are men who would go into an ecstasy of delight if I ran a hat-pin into them. I am merely taking this as an illustration of my point.”

“It is a very fine point,” said I. “But some people take pleasure in odd things. I can easily conceive of a man gallant enough to suffer the agony for the sake of pleasing a pretty girl.”

“I told you so,” she pouted; “you have missed it entirely. You are hopelessly blind on that side, and numb. Perhaps you didn’t know that you have had a hat-pin sticking in you for some time.”

I began feeling myself, nervously.

“For more than a month,” she cried, “and to think that you have never felt it.” My action was too much for her gravity, and she fell back against the skylight in a fit of merriment, which threatened to wake her father. And I hoped it would.



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"It pleases you to speak in parables this morning," I said.

"Mr. Crocker," she began again, when she had regained her speech, "shall I tell you of a great misfortune which might happen to a girl?"

"I should be pleased to hear it," I replied courteously.

"That misfortune, then, would be to fall in love with you."

"Happily that is not within the limits of probability," I answered, beginning to be a little amused. "But why?"

"Lightning often strikes where it is least expected," she replied archly. "Listen. If a young woman were unlucky enough to lose her heart to you, she might do everything but tell you, and you would never know it. I scarcely believe you would know it if she did tell you."

I must have jumped unconsciously.

"Oh, you needn't think I am in love with you."

"Not for a minute," I made haste to say.

She pointed towards the timber-covered hills beyond the shore.

"Do you see that stream which comes foaming down the notch into the lake in front of us?" she asked. "Let us suppose that you lived in a cabin beside that brook; and that once in a while, when you went out to draw your water, you saw a nugget of—gold washing along with the pebbles on the bed. How many days do you think you would be in coming to the conclusion that there was a pocket of gold somewhere above you, and in starting in search of it?"

"Not long, surely."

"Ah, you are not lacking in perception there. But if I were to tell you that I knew of the existence of such a mine, from various proofs I have had, and that the mine was in the possession of a certain person who was quite willing to share it with you on application, you would not believe me."

"Probably not."

"Well," said Miss Trevor, with a nod of finality, "I was actually about to make such a disclosure. But I see it would be useless."

I confess she aroused my curiosity. No coaxing, however, would induce her to interpret.



“No,” she insisted strangely, “if you cannot put two and two together, I fear I cannot help you. And no one I ever heard of has come to any good by meddling.”

Miss Trevor folded her hands across her lap. She wore that air which I am led to believe is common to all women who have something of importance to disclose; or at least what they consider is of importance. There was an element of pity, too, in her expression. For she had given me my chance, and my wits had been found wanting.

Do not let it be surmised that I attach any great value to such banter as she had been indulging in. At the same time, however, I had an uneasy feeling that I had missed something which might have been to my advantage. It was in vain that I whipped my dull senses; but one conclusion was indicated by all this inference, and I don't care even to mention that: it was preposterous.

Then Miss Trevor shifted to a very serious mood. She honestly did her best to persuade me to relinquish our enterprise, to go to Mr. Cooke and confess the whole thing.



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"I wish we had washed our hands of this Celebrity from the first," she said, with a sigh. "How dreadful if you lose your position on account of this foolishness!"

"But I shan't," I answered reassuringly; "we are getting near the border now, and no sign of trouble. And besides," I added, "I think Miss Thorn tried to frighten me. And she very nearly succeeded. It was prettily done."

"Of course she tried to frighten you. I wish she had succeeded."

"But her object was transparent."

"Her object!" she exclaimed. "Her object was to save you."

"I think not," I replied; "it was to save the Celebrity."

Miss Trevor rose and grasped one of the sail rings to keep her balance. She looked at me pityingly.

"Do you really believe that?"

"Firmly."

"Then you are hopeless, Mr. Crocker, totally hopeless. I give you up." And she went back to her seat beside the refrigerator.

CHAPTER XVII

"Crocker, old man, Crocker, what the devil does that mean?"

I turned with a start to perceive a bare head thrust above the cabin roof, the scant hair flying, and two large, brown eyes staring into mine full of alarm and reproach. A plump finger was pointing to where the sandy reef lay far astern of us.

The Mackinaws were flecked far and wide over the lake, and a dirty smudge on the blue showed where the Far Harbor and Beaverton boat had gone over the horizon. But there, over the point and dangerously close to the land, hung another smudge, gradually pushing its way like a writhing, black serpent, lakewards. Thus I was rudely jerked back to face the problem with which we had left the island that morning.

I snatched the neglected glasses from the deck and hurried aft to join my client on the overhang, but a pipe was all they revealed above the bleak hillocks of sand. My client turned to me with a face that was white under the tan.



“Crocker,” he cried, in a tragic voice, “it’s a blessed police boat, or I never picked a winner.”

“Nonsense,” I said; “other boats smoke beside police boats. The lake is full of tugs.”

I was a little nettled at having been scared for a molehill.

“But I know it, sure as hell,” he insisted.

“You know nothing about it, and won’t for an hour. What’s a pipe and a trail of smoke?”

He laid a hand on my shoulder, and I felt it tremble.

“Why do you suppose I came out?” he demanded solemnly.

“You were probably losing,” I said.

“I was winning.”

“Then you got tired of winning.”

But he held up a thumb within a few inches of my face, and with it a ring I had often noticed, a huge opal which he customarily wore on the inside of his hand.

“She’s dead,” said Mr. Cooke, sadly.

“Dead?” I repeated, perplexed.

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“Yes, she’s dead as the day I lost the two thousand at Sheepshead. She’s never gone back on me yet. And unless I can make some little arrangement with those fellows,” he added, tossing his head at the smoke, “you and I will put up to-night in some barn of a jail. I’ve never been in jail but once,” said Mr. Cooke, “and it isn’t so damned pleasant, I assure you.” I saw that he believed every word of it; in fact, that it was his religion. I might as well have tried to argue the Sultan out of Mohammedanism.

The pipe belonged to a tug, that was certain. Farrar said so after a look over his shoulder, disdaining glasses, and he knew the lake better than many who made their living by it. It was then that I made note of a curious anomaly in the betting character; for thus far Mr. Cooke, like a great many of his friends, was a skeptic. He never ceased to hope until the stake had found its way into the other man’s pocket. And it was for hope that he now applied to Farrar. But even Farrar did not attempt to account for the tug’s appearance that near the land.

“She’s in some detestable hurry to get up this way, that’s flat,” he said; “where she is, the channel out of the harbor is not forty feet wide.”

By this time the rest of the party were gathered behind us on the high side of the boat, in different stages of excitement, scrutinizing the smoke. Mr. Cooke had the glasses glued to his eyes again, his feet braced apart, and every line of his body bespeaking the tension of his mind. I imagined him standing thus, the stump of his cigar tightly clutched between his teeth, following the fortunes of some favorite on the far side of the Belmont track.

We waited without comment while the smoke crept by degrees towards the little white spindle on the tip of the point, now and again catching a gleam of the sun’s rays from off the glass of the lantern. And presently, against the white lather of the lake, I thought I caught sight of a black nose pushed out beyond the land. Another moment, and the tug itself was bobbing in the open. Barely had she reached the deep water beyond the sands when her length began to shorten, and the dense cloud of smoke that rose made it plain that she was firing. At the sight I reflected that I had been a fool indeed. A scant flue miles of water lay between us and her, and if they really meant business back there, and they gave every sign of it, we had about an hour and a half to get rid of the Celebrity. The Maria was a good boat, but she had not been built to try conclusions with a Far Harbor tug.

My client, in spite of the ominous condition of his opal, was not slow to make his intentions exceedingly clear. For Mr. Cooke was first and last, and always, a gentleman. After that you might call him anything you pleased. Meditatively he screwed up his glasses and buckled them into the case, and then he descended to the cockpit. It was the Celebrity he singled out of the party.



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“Allen,” said he, when he stood before him, “I want to impress on you that my word's gold. I've stuck to you thus far, and I'll be damned now if I throw you over, like they did Jonah.”

Mr. Cooke spoke with a fine dignity that in itself was impressive, and when he had finished he looked about him until his eye rested on Mr. Trevor, as though opposition were to come from that quarter. And the senator gave every sign of another eruption. But the Celebrity, either from lack of appreciation of my client's loyalty, or because of the nervousness which was beginning to show itself in his demeanor, despite an effort to hide it, returned no answer. He turned on his heel and resumed his seat in the cabin. Mr. Cooke was visibly affected.

“I'd sooner lose my whip hand than go back on him now,” he declared.

Then Vesuvius began to rumble.

“Mr. Cooke,” said the senator, “may I suggest something which seems pertinent to me, though it does not appear to have occurred to you?”

His tone was the calm one that the heroes used in the Celebrity's novels when they were about to drop on and annihilate wicked men.

“Certainly, sir,” my client replied briskly, bringing himself up on his way back to the overhang.

“You have announced your intention of ‘standing by’ Mr. Allen, as you express it. Have you reflected that there are some others who deserve to be consulted and considered beside Mr. Allen and yourself?”

Mr. Cooke was puzzled at this change of front, and unused, moreover, to that veiled irony of parliamentary expression.

“Talk English, my friend,” said he.

“In plain words, sir, Mr. Allen is a criminal who ought to be locked up; he is a menace to society. You, who have a reputation, I am given to understand, for driving four horses, have nothing to lose by a scandal, while I have worked all my life for the little I have achieved, and have a daughter to think about. I will neither stand by Mr. Allen nor by you.”

Mr. Cooke was ready with a retort when the true significance of this struck him. Things were a trifle different now. The tables had turned since leaving the island, and the senator held it in his power to ruin our one remaining chance of escape. Strangely enough, he missed the cause of Mr. Cooke's hesitation.



“Look here, old man,” said my client, biting off another cigar, “I’m a first-rate fellow when you get to know me, and I’d do the same for you as I’m doing for Allen.”

“I daresay, sir, I daresay,” said the other, a trifle mollified; “I don’t claim that you’re not acting as you think right.”

“I see it,” said Mr. Cooke, with admirable humility; “I see it. I was wrong to haul you into this, Trevor. And the only thing to consider now is, how to get you out of it.”

Here he appeared for a moment to be wrapped in deep thought, and checked with his cigar an attempt to interrupt him.

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“However you put it, old man,” he said at last, “we’re all in a pretty bad hole.”

“All!” cried Mr. Trevor, indignantly.

“Yes, all,” asserted Mr. Cooke, with composure. “There are the police, and here is Allen as good as run down. If they find him when they get abroad, you don’t suppose they’ll swallow anything you have to say about trying to deliver him over. No, sir, you’ll be bagged and fined along with the rest of us. And I’d be damned sorry to see it, if I do say it; and I blame myself freely for it, old man. Now you take my advice and keep your mouth shut, and I’ll take care of you. I’ve got a place for Allen.”

During this somewhat remarkable speech Mr. Trevor, as it were, blew hot and cold by turns. Although its delivery was inconsiderate, its logic was undeniable, and the senator sat down again on the locker, and was silent. But I marked that off and on his fingers would open and shut convulsively.

Time alone would disclose what was to happen to us; in the interval there was nothing to do but wait. We had reached the stage where anxiety begins to take the place of excitement, and we shifted restlessly from spot to spot and looked at the tug. She was ploughing along after us, and to such good purpose that presently I began to catch the white of the seas along her bows, and the bright red with which her pipe was tipped. Farrar alone seemed to take but slight interest in her. More than once I glanced at him as he stood under me, but his eye was on the shuddering leach of the sail. Then I leaned over.

“What do you think of it?” I asked.

“I told you this morning Drew would have handcuffs on him before night,” he replied, without raising his head.

“Hang your joking, Farrar; I know more than you about it.”

“Then what’s the use of asking me?”

“Don’t you see that I’m ruined if we’re caught?” I demanded, a little warmly.

“No, I don’t see it,” he replied. “You don’t suppose I think you fool enough to risk this comedy if the man were guilty, do you? I don’t believe all that rubbish about his being the criminal’s double, either. That’s something the girls got up for your benefit.”

I ignored this piece of brutality.

“But I’m ruined anyway.”

“How?”



I explained shortly what I thought our friend, O'Meara, would do under the circumstances. An inference sufficed Farrar.

"Why didn't you say something about this before?" he asked gravely. "I would have put into Far Harbor."

"Because I didn't think of it," I confessed.

Farrar pulled down the corners of his mouth with trying not to smile.

"Miss Thorn is a woman of brains," he remarked gently; "I respect her."

I wondered by what mysterious train of reasoning he had arrived at this conclusion. He said nothing for a while, but toyed with the spokes of the wheel, keeping the wind in the sail with undue nicety.



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"I can't make them out," he said, all at once.

"Then you believe they're after us?"

"I changed the course a point or two, just to try them."

"And—"

"And they changed theirs."

"Who could have informed?"

"Drew, of course," I said; "who else?"

He laughed.

"Drew doesn't know anything about Allen," said he; "and, besides, he's no more of a detective than I am."

"But Drew was told there was a criminal on the island."

"Who told him?"

I repeated the conversation between Drew and Mr. Trevor which I had overheard. Farrar whistled.

"But you did not speak of that this morning," said he.

"No," I replied, feeling anything but comfortable. At times when he was facetious as he had been this morning I was wont to lose sight of the fact that with Farrar the manner was not the man, and to forget the warmth of his friendship. I was again to be reminded of this.

"Well, Crocker," he said briefly, "I would willingly give up this year's state contract to have known it."

CHAPTER XVIII

It was, accurately as I can remember, half after noon when Mr. Cooke first caught the smoke over the point, for the sun was very high: at two our fate had been decided. I have already tried to describe a part of what took place in that hour and a half, although even now I cannot get it all straight in my mind. Races, when a great deal is at stake, are more or less chaotic: a close four miles in a college eight is a succession of blurs with lucid but irrelevant intervals. The weary months of hard work are forgotten, and



you are quite as apt to think of your first velocipede, or of the pie that is awaiting you in the boathouse, as of victory and defeat. And a yacht race, with a pair of rivals on your beam, is very much the same.

As I sat with my feet dangling over the washboard, I reflected, once or twice, that we were engaged in a race. All I had to do was to twist my head in order to make sure of it. I also reflected, I believe, that I was in the position of a man who has bet all he owns, with large odds on losing either way. But on the whole I was occupied with more trivial matters a letter I had forgotten to write about a month's rent, a client whose summer address I had mislaid. The sun was burning my neck behind when a whistle aroused me to the realization that the tug was no longer a toy boat dancing in the distance, but a stern fact but two miles away. There could be no mistake now, for I saw the white steam of the signal against the smoke.

I slid down and went into the cabin. The Celebrity was in the corner by the companionway, with his head on the cushions and a book in his hand. And forward, under the low deck beams beyond the skylight, I beheld the crouching figure of my client. He had stripped off his coat and was busy at some task on the floor.



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“They’re whistling for us to stop,” I said to him.

“How near are they, old man?” he asked, without looking up. The perspiration was streaming down his face, and he held a brace and bit in his hand. Under him was the trap-door which gave access to the ballast below, and through this he had bored a neat hole. The yellow chips were still on his clothes.

“They’re not two miles away,” I answered. “But what in mystery are you doing there?”

But he only laid a finger beside his nose and bestowed a wink in my direction. Then he took some ashes from his cigar, wetted his finger, and thus ingeniously removed all appearance of newness from the hole he had made, carefully cleaning up the chips and putting them in his pocket. Finally he concealed the brace and bit and opened the trap, disclosing the rough stones of the ballast. I watched him in amazement as he tore a mattress from an adjoining bunk and forced it through the opening, spreading it fore and aft over the stones.

“Now,” he said, regaining his feet and surveying the whole with undisguised satisfaction, “he’ll be as safe there as in my new family vault.”

“But” I began, a light dawning upon me.

“Allen, old man,” said Mr. Cooke, “come here.”

The Celebrity laid down his book and looked up: my client was putting on his coat.

“Come here, old man,” he repeated.

And he actually came. But he stopped when he caught sight of the open trap and of the mattress beneath it.

“How will that suit you?” asked Mr. Cooke, smiling broadly as he wiped his face with an embroidered handkerchief.

The Celebrity looked at the mattress, then at me, and lastly at Mr. Cooke. His face was a study:

“And—And you think I am going to get in there?” he said, his voice shaking.

My client fell back a step.

“Why not?” he demanded. “It’s about your size, comfortable, and all the air you want” (here Mr. Cooke stuck his finger through the bit hole). “Damn me, if I were in your fix, I wouldn’t stop at a kennel.”



“Then you’re cursed badly mistaken,” said the Celebrity, going back to his corner; “I’m tired of being made an ass of for you and your party.”

“An ass!” exclaimed my client, in proper indignation.

“Yes, an ass,” said the Celebrity. And he resumed his book.

It would seem that a student of human nature, such as every successful writer should be, might by this time have arrived at some conception of my client’s character, simple as it was, and have learned to overlook the slight peculiarity in his mode of expressing himself. But here the Celebrity fell short, if my client’s emotions were not pitched in the same key as those of other people, who shall say that his heart was not as large or his sympathies as wide as many another philanthropist?



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But Mr. Cooke was an optimist, and as such disposed to look at the best side of his friends and ignore the worst; if, indeed, he perceived their faults at all. It was plain to me, even now, that he did not comprehend the Celebrity's attitude. That his guest should reject the one hope of escape left him was, according to Mr. Cooke, only to be accounted for by a loss of mental balance. Nevertheless, his disappointment was keen. He let down the door and slowly led the way out of the cabin. The whistle sounded shrilly in our ears.

Mr. Cooke sat down and drew a wallet from his pocket. He began to count the bills, and, as if by common consent, the Four followed suit. It was a task which occupied some minutes, and when completed my client produced a morocco note-book and a pencil. He glanced interrogatively at the man nearest him.

"Three hundred and fifty."

Mr. Cooke put it down. It was entirely a matter of course. What else was there to be done? And when he had gone the round of his followers he turned to Farrar and me.

"How much are you fellows equal to?" he asked.

I believe he did it because he felt we should resent being left out: and so we should have. Mr. Cooke's instincts were delicate.

We told him. Then he paused, his pencil in the air, and his eyes doubtfully fixed on the senator. For all this time Mr. Trevor had been fidgeting in his seat; but now he opened his long coat, button by button, and thrust his hand inside the flap. Oh, Falstaff!

"Father, father!" exclaimed Miss Trevor. But her tongue was in her cheek.

I have heard it stated that if a thoroughly righteous man were cast away with ninety and nine ruffians, each of the ruffians would gain one-one-hundredth in virtue, whilst the righteous man would sink to their new level. I am not able to say how much better Mr. Cooke's party was for Mr. Trevor's company, but the senator seemed to realize that something serious had happened to him, for his voice was not altogether steady as he pronounced the amount of his contribution.

"Trevor," cried Mr. Cooke, with great fervor, "I take it all back. You're a true, public-spirited old sport."

But the senator had not yet reached that extreme of degradation where it is pleasurable to be congratulated on wickedness.

My client added up the figures and rubbed his hands. I regret to say that the aggregate would have bought up three small police organizations, body and soul.

“Pull up, Farrar, old man,” he shouted.

Farrar released the wheel and threw the Maria into the wind. With the sail cracking and the big boom dodging over our heads, we watched the tug as she drew nearer and nearer, until we could hear the loud beating of her engines. On one side some men were making ready to lower a boat, and then a conspicuous figure in blue stood out by the davits. Then came the faint tinkle of a bell, and the H Sinclair, of Far Harbor, glided up and thrashed the water scarce a biscuit-throw away.



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"Hello, there!" the man in uniform called out. It was Captain McCann, chief of the Far Harbor police.

Mr. Cooke waved his cigar politely.

"Is that Mr. Cooke's yacht, the Maria?"

"The same," said Mr. Cooke.

"I'm fearing I'll have to come aboard you, Mr. Cooke."

"All right, old man, glad to have you," said my client.

This brought a smile to McCann's face as he got into his boat. We were all standing in the cockpit, save the Celebrity, who was just inside of the cabin door. I had time to note that he was pale, and no more: I must have been pale myself. A few strokes brought the chief to the Maria's stern.

"It's not me that likes to interfere with a gent's pleasure party, but business is business," said he, as he climbed aboard.

My client's hospitality was oriental.

"Make yourself at home, old man," he said, a box of his largest and blackest cigars in his hand. And these he advanced towards McCann before the knot was tied in the painter.

Then a wave of self-reproach swept over me. Was it possible that I, like Mr. Trevor, had been deprived of all the morals I had ever possessed? Could it be that the district attorney was looking calmly on while Mr. Cooke wilfully corrupted the Far Harbor chief-of-police? As agonizing a minute as I ever had in my life was that which it took McCann to survey those cigars. His broad features became broader still, as a huge, red hand was reached out. I saw it close lingeringly over the box, and then Mr. Cooke had struck a match. The chief stepped over the washboard onto the handsome turkey-red cushions on the seats, and thus he came face to face with me.

"Holy fathers!" he exclaimed. "Is it you who are here, Mr. Crocker?" And he pulled off his cap.

"No other, McCann," said I, with what I believe was a most pitiful attempt at braggadocio.

McCann began to puff at his cigar. Clouds of smoke came out of his face and floated down the wind. He was so visibly embarrassed that I gained a little courage.



“And what brings you here?” I demanded.

He scrutinized me in perplexity.

“I think you’re guessing, sir.”

“Never a guess, McCann. You’ll have to explain yourself.”

McCann had once had a wholesome respect for me. But it looked now as if the bottom was dropping out of it.

“Sure, Mr. Crocker,” he said, “what would you be doing in such company as I’m hunting for? Can it be that ye’re helping to lift a criminal over the border?”

“McCann,” I asked sternly, “what have you had on the, tug?”

Force of habit proved too much for the man. He went back to the apologetic.

“Never a drop, Mr. Crocker. Upon me soul!”

This reminded Mr. Cooke of something (be it recorded) that he had for once forgotten. He lifted up the top of the refrigerator. The chief’s eye followed him. But I was not going to permit this.

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“Now, McCann,” I commenced again, “if you will state your business here, if you have any, I shall be obliged. You are delaying Mr. Cooke.”

The chief was seized with a nervous tremor. I think we were a pair in that, only I managed to keep mine, under. When it came to the point, and any bribing was to be done, I had hit upon a course. Self-respect demanded a dignity on my part. With a painful indecision McCann pulled a paper from his pocket which I saw was a warrant. And he dropped his cigar. Mr. Cooke was quick to give him another.

“Ye come from Bear Island, Mr. Crocker?” he inquired.

I replied in the affirmative.

“I hope it’s news I’m telling you,” he said soberly; “I’m hoping it’s news when I say that I’m here for Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen,—that’s the gentleman’s name. He’s after taking a hundred thousand dollars away from Boston.” Then he turned to Mr. Cooke. “The gentleman was aboard your boat, sir, when you left that country place of yours,—what d’ye call it? —Mohair? Thank you, sir.” And he wiped the water from his brow. “And they’re telling me he was on Bear Island with ye? Sure, sir, and I can’t see why a gentleman of your standing would be wanting to get him over the border. But I must do my duty. Begging your pardon, Mr. Crocker,” he added, with a bow to me.

“Certainly, McCann,” I said.

For a space there was only the bumping and straining of the yacht and the swish of the water against her sides. Then the chief spoke again.

“It will be saving you both trouble and inconvenience, Mr. Crocker, if you give him up, sir.”

What did the man mean? Why in the name of the law didn’t he make a move? I was conscious that my client was fumbling in his clothes for the wallet; that he had muttered an invitation for the chief to go inside. McCann smoked uneasily.

“I don’t want to search the boat, sir.”

At these words we all turned with one accord towards the cabin. I felt Farrar gripping my arm tightly from behind.

The Celebrity had disappeared!

It was Mr. Cooke who spoke.

“Search the boat!” he said, something between a laugh and a cry.



“Yes, sir,” the chief repeated firmly. “It’s sorry I am to do it, with Mr. Crocker here, too.”

I have always maintained that nature had endowed my client with rare gifts; and the ease with which he now assumed a part thus unexpectedly thrust upon him, as well as the assurance with which he carried it out, goes far to prove it.

“If there’s anything in your line aboard, chief,” he said blandly, “help yourself!”



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Some of us laughed. I thought things a little too close to be funny. Since the Celebrity had lost his nerve and betaken himself to the place of concealment Mr. Cooke had prepared for him, the whole composition of the affair was changed. Before, if McCann had arrested the ostensible Mr. Allen, my word, added to fifty dollars from my client, would probably have been sufficient. Should he be found now, no district attorney on the face of the earth could induce the chief to believe that he was any other than the real criminal; nor would any bribe be large enough to compensate McCann for the consequences of losing so important a prisoner. There was nothing now but to carry it off with a high hand. McCann got up.

“Be your lave, Mr. Crocker,” he said.

“Never you mind me, McCann,” I replied, “but you do what is right.”

With that he began his search. It might have been ludicrous if I had had any desire to laugh, for the chief wore the gingerly air of a man looking for a rattlesnake which has to be got somehow. And my client assisted at the inspection with all the graces of a dancing-master. McCann poked into the forward lockers where we kept the stores,—dropping the iron lid within an inch of his toe,—and the clothing-lockers and the sail-lockers. He reached under the bunks, and drew out his hand again quickly, as though he expected to be bitten. And at last he stood by the trap with the hole in it, under which the Celebrity lay prostrate. I could hear my own breathing. But Mr. Cooke had his wits about him still, and at this critical juncture he gave McCann a thump on the back which nearly carried him off his feet.

“They say the mast is hollow, old man,” he suggested.

“Be jabbers, Mr. Cooke,” said McCann, “and I’m beginning to think it is!”

“He took off his cap and scratched his head.

“Well, McCann, I hope you’re contented,” I said.

“Mr. Crocker,” said he, “and it’s that thankful I am for you that the gent ain’t here. But with him cutting high finks up at Mr. Cooke’s house with a valet, and him coming on the yacht with yese, and the whole country in that state about him, begorra,” said McCann, “and it’s domned strange! Maybe it’s swimmin’ in the water he is!”

The whole party had followed the search, and at this speech of the chief’s our nervous tension became suddenly relaxed. Most of us sat down to laugh.

“I’m asking no questions, Mr. Crocker, yell take notice,” he remarked, his voice full of reproachful meaning.

“McCann,” said I, “you come outside. I want to speak to you.”



He followed me out.

“Now,” I went on, “you know me pretty well” (he nodded doubtfully), “and if I give you my word that Charles Wrexell Allen is not on this yacht, and never has been, is that sufficient?”

“Is it the truth you’re saying, sir?”

I assured him that it was.

“Then where is he, Mr. Crocker?”



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“God only knows!” I replied, with fervor. “I don’t, McCann.”

The chief was satisfied. He went back into the cabin, and Mr. Cooke, in the exuberance of his joy, produced champagne. McCann had heard of my client and of his luxurious country place, and moreover it was the first time he had ever been on a yellow-plush yacht. He tarried. He drank Mr. Cooke’s health and looked around him in wonder and awe, and his remarks were worthy of record. These sayings and the thought of the author of *The Sybarites* stifling below with his mouth to an auger-hole kept us in a continual state of merriment. And at last our visitor rose to go.

As he was stepping over the side, Mr. Cooke laid hold of a brass button and pressed a handful of the black cigars upon him.

“My regards to the detective, old man,” said he.

McCann stared.

“My regards to Drew,” my client insisted.

“Oh!” said McCann, his face lighting up, “him with the whiskers, what came from Bear Island in a cat-boat. Sure, he wasn’t no detective, sir.”

“What was he? A police commissioner?”

“Mr. Cooke,” said McCann, disdainfully, as he got into his boat, “he wasn’t nothing but a prospector doing the lake for one of them summer hotel companies.”

CHAPTER XIX

When the biography of the Celebrity is written, and I have no doubt it will be some day, may his biographer kindly draw a veil over that instant in his life when he was tenderly and obsequiously raised by Mr. Cooke from the trap in the floor of the Maria’s cabin.

It is sometimes the case that a good fright will heal a feud. And whereas, before the arrival of the H. Sinclair, there had been much dissension and many quarrels concerning the disposal of the quasi Charles Wrexell Allen, when the tug steamed away to the southwards but one opinion remained,—that, like Jonah, he must be got rid of. And no one concurred more heartily in this than the Celebrity himself. He strolled about and smoked apathetically, with the manner of one who was bored beyond description, whilst the discussion was going on between Farrar, Mr. Cooke, and myself as to the best place to land him. When considerately asked by my client whether he had any choice in the matter, he replied, somewhat facetiously, that he could not think of making a suggestion to one who had shown such superlative skill in its previous management.



Mr. Trevor, too, experienced a change of sentiment in Mr. Cooke's favor. It is not too much to say that the senator's scare had been of such thoroughness that he was willing to agree to almost anything. He had come so near to being relieved of that most precious possession, his respectability, that the reason in Mr. Cooke's course now appealed to him very strongly. Thus he became a tacit assenter in wrong-doing, for circumstances thrust this, once in a while, upon the best of our citizens.



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The afternoon wore cool; nay, cold is a better word. The wind brought with it a suggestion of the pine-clad wastes of the northwestern wilderness whence it came, and that sure harbinger of autumn, the blue haze, settled around the hills, and benumbed the rays of the sun lingering over the crests. Farrar and I, as navigators, were glad to get into our overcoats, while the others assembled in the little cabin and lighted the gasoline stove which stood in the corner. Outside we had our pipes for consolation, and the sunset beauty of the lake.

By six we were well over the line, and consulting our chart, we selected a cove behind a headland on our left, which seemed the best we could do for an anchorage, although it was shallow and full of rocks. As we were changing our course to run in, Mr. Cooke appeared, bundled up in his reefer. He was in the best of spirits, and was good enough to concur with our plans.

"Now, sir," asked Farrar, "what do you propose to do with Allen?"

But our client only chuckled.

"Wait and see, old man," he said; "I've got that all fixed."

"Well," Farrar remarked, when he had gone in again, "he has steered it deuced well so far. I think we can trust him."

It was dark when we dropped anchor, a very tired party indeed; and as the *Maria* could not accommodate us all with sleeping quarters, Mr. Cooke decided that the ladies should have the cabin, since the night was cold. And so it might have been, had not Miss Thorn flatly refused to sleep there. The cabin was stuffy, she said, and so she carried her point. Leaving Farrar and one of Mr. Cooke's friends to take care of the yacht, the rest of us went ashore, built a roaring fire and raised a tent, and proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow. The sense of relief over the danger passed produced a kind of lightheartedness amongst us, and the topics broached at supper would not have been inappropriate at a friendly dinner party. As we were separating for the night Miss Thorn said to me:

"I am so happy for your sake, Mr. Crocker, that he was not discovered."

For my sake! Could she really have meant it, after all? I went to sleep thinking of that sentence, beside my client beneath the trees. And it was first in my thoughts when I awoke.

As we dipped our faces in the brook the next morning my client laughed softly to himself between the gasps, and I knew that he had in mind the last consummate touch to his successful enterprise. And the revelation came when the party were assembled at breakfast. Mr. Cooke stood up, and drawing from his pocket a small and mysterious

paper parcel he forthwith delivered himself in the tone and manner which had so endeared him to the familiars of the Lake House bar.

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"I'm not much for words, as you all know," said he, with becoming modesty, "and I don't set up to be an orator. I am just what you see here,—a damned plain man. And there's only one virtue that I lay any claim to,—no one can say that I ever went back on a friend. I want to thank all of you (looking at the senator) for what you have done for me and Allen. It's not for us to talk about that hundred thousand dollars. —My private opinion is (he seemed to have no scruples about making it public) that Allen is insane. No, old man, don't interrupt me; but you haven't acted just right, and that's a fact. And I won't feel square with myself until I put him where I found him, in safety. I am sorry to say, my friends," he added, with emotion, "that Mr. Allen is about to leave us."

He paused for breath, palpably satisfied with so much of it, and with the effect on his audience.

"Now," continued he, "we start this morning for a place which is only four miles or so from the town of Saville, and I shall then request my esteemed legal adviser, Mr. Crocker, to proceed to the town and buy a ready-made suit of clothes for Mr. Allen, a slouch hat, a cheap necktie, and a stout pair of farmer's boots. And I have here," he said, holding up the package, "I have here the rest of it. My friends, you heard the chief tell me that Drew was doing the lake for a summer hotel syndicate. But if Drew wasn't a detective you can throw me into the lake! He wasn't exactly Pinkerton, and I flatter myself that we were too many for him," said Mr. Cooke, with deserved pride; "and he went away in such a devilish hurry that he forgot his hand-bag with some of his extra things."

Then my client opened the package, and held up on a string before our astonished eyes a wig, a pair of moustaches, and two bushy red whiskers.

And this was Mr. Cooke's scheme! Did it electrify his hearers? Perhaps. Even the senator was so choked with laughter that he was forced to cast loose one of the buttons which held on his turn-down collar, and Farrar retired into the woods. But the gravity of Mr. Cooke's countenance remained serene.

"Old man," he said to the Celebrity, "you'll have to learn the price of potatoes now. Here are Mr. Drew's duplicates; try 'em on."

This the Celebrity politely but firmly refused to do.

"Cooke," said he, "it has never been my lot to visit so kind and considerate a host, or to know a man who pursued his duty with so little thought and care of his own peril. I wish to thank you, and to apologize for any hasty expressions I may have dropped by mistake, and I would it were possible to convince you that I am neither a maniac nor an embezzler. But, if it's just the same to you, I believe I can get along without the disguise you mentioned, and so save Mr. Crocker his pains. In short, if you will set me down at

Saville, I am willing to take my chances of reaching the Canadian Pacific from that point without fear of detection.”



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The Celebrity's speech produced a good impression on all save Mr. Cooke, who appeared a trifle water-logged. He had dealt successfully with Mr. Allen when that gentleman had been in defiant moods, or in moods of ugly sarcasm. But this good-natured, turn-you-down-easy note puzzled my client not a little. Was this cherished scheme a whim or a joke to be lightly cast aside? Mr. Cooke thought not. The determination which distinguished him still sat in his eye as he bustled about giving orders for the breaking of camp. This refractory criminal must be saved from himself, cost what it might, and responsibility again rested heavy on my client's mind as I rowed him out to the Maria.

"Crocker," he said, "if Allen is scooped in spite of us, you have got to go East and make him out an idiot."

He seemed to think that I had a talent for this particular defence. I replied that I would do my best.

"It won't be difficult," he went on; "not near as tough as that case you won for me. You can bring in all the bosh about his claiming to be an author, you know. And I'll stand expenses."

This was downright generous of Mr. Cooke. We have all, no doubt, drawn our line between what is right and what is wrong, but I have often wondered how many of us with the world's indorsement across our backs trespass as little on the other side of the line as he.

After Farrar and the Four got aboard it fell to my lot to row the rest of the party to the yacht. And this was no slight task that morning. The tender was small, holding but two beside the man at the oars, and owing to the rocks and shallow water of which I have spoken, the Maria lay considerably over a quarter of a mile out. Hence each trip occupied some time. Mr. Cooke I had transferred with a load of canvas and the tent poles, and next I returned for Mrs. Cooke and Mr. Trevor, whom I deposited safely. Then I landed again, helped in Miss Trevor and Miss Thorn, leaving the Celebrity for the last, and was pulling for the yacht when a cry from the tender's stern arrested me.

"Mr. Crocker, they are sailing away without us!"

I turned in my seat. The Maria's mainsail was up, and the jib was being hoisted, and her head was rapidly falling off to the wind. Farrar was casting. In the stern, waving a handkerchief, I recognized Mrs. Cooke, and beside her a figure in black, gesticulating frantically, a vision of coat-tails flapping in the breeze. Then the yacht heeled on her course and forged lakewards.

"Row, Mr. Crocker, row! they are leaving us!" cried Miss Trevor, in alarm.

I hastened to reassure her.

“Farrar is probably trying something,” I said. “They will be turning presently.”

This is just what they did not do. Once out of the inlet, they went about and headed northward, up the coast, and we remained watching them until Mr. Trevor became a mere oscillating black speck against the sail.



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"What can it mean?" asked Miss Thorn.

I had not so much as an idea.

"They certainly won't desert us, at any rate," I said. "We had better go ashore again and wait."

The Celebrity was seated on the beach, and he was whittling. Now whittling is an occupation which speaks of a contented frame of mind, and the Maria's departure did not seem to have annoyed or disturbed him.

"Castaways," says he, gayly, "castaways on a foreign shore. Two delightful young ladies, a bright young lawyer, a fugitive from justice, no chaperon, and nothing to eat. And what a situation for a short story, if only an author were permitted to make use of his own experiences!"

"Only you don't know how it will end," Miss Thorn put in.

The Celebrity glanced up at her.

"I have a guess," said he, with a smile.

"Is it true," Miss Trevor asked, "that a story must contain the element of love in order to find favor with the public?"

"That generally recommends it, especially to your sex, Miss Trevor," he replied jocosely.

Miss Trevor appeared interested.

"And tell me," she went on, "isn't it sometimes the case that you start out intent on one ending, and that your artistic sense of what is fitting demands another?"

"Don't be silly, Irene," said Miss Thorn. She was skipping flat pebbles over the water, and doing it capitally, too.

I thought the Celebrity rather resented the question.

"That sometimes happens, of course," said he, carelessly. He produced his inevitable gold cigarette case and held it out to me. "Be sociable for once, and have one," he said.

I accepted.

"Do you know," he continued, lighting me a match, "it beats me why you and Miss Trevor put this thing up on me. You have enjoyed it, naturally, and if you wanted to make me out a donkey you succeeded rather well. I used to think that Crocker was a



pretty good friend of mine when I went to his dinners in New York. And I once had every reason to believe," he added, "that Miss Trevor and I were on excellent terms."

Was this audacity or stupidity? Undoubtedly both.

"So we were," answered Miss Trevor, "and I should be very sorry to think, Mr. Allen," she said meaningly, "that our relations had in any way changed."

It was the Celebrity's turn to flush.

"At any rate," he remarked in his most offhand manner, "I am much obliged to you both. On sober reflection I have come to believe that you did the very best thing for my reputation."

CHAPTER XX

He had scarcely uttered these words before the reason for the Maria's abrupt departure became apparent. The anchorage of the yacht had been at a spot whence nearly the whole south of the lake towards Far Harbor was open, whilst a high tongue of land hid that part from us on the shore. As he spoke, there shot before our eyes a steaming tug-boat, and a second look was not needed to assure me that she was the "H. Sinclair, of Far Harbor." They had perceived her from the yacht an hour since, and it was clear that my client, prompt to act as to think, had decided at once to put out and lead her a blind chase, so giving the Celebrity a chance to make good his escape.



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The surprise and apprehension created amongst us by her sudden appearance was such that none of us, for a space, spoke or moved. She was about a mile off shore, but it was even whether the chief would decide that his quarry had been left behind in the inlet and turn in, or whether he would push ahead after the yacht. He gave us an abominable five minutes of uncertainty. For when he came opposite the cove he slowed up, apparently weighing his chances. It was fortunate that we were hidden from his glasses by a copse of pines. The Sinclair increased her speed and pushed northward after the Maria. I turned to the Celebrity.

"If you wish to escape, now is your chance," I said.

For contrariness he was more than I have ever had to deal with. Now he crossed his knees and laughed.

"It strikes me you had better escape, Crocker," said he. "You have more to run for."

I looked across at Miss Thorn. She had told him, then, of my predicament. And she did not meet my eye. He began to whittle again, and remarked:

"It is only seventeen miles or so across these hills to Far Harbor, old chap, and you can get a train there for Asquith."

"Just as you choose," said I, shortly.

With that I started off to gain the top of the promontory in order to watch the chase. I knew that this could not last as long as that of the day before. In less than three hours we might expect the Maria and the tug in the cove. And, to be frank, the indisposition of the Celebrity to run troubled me. Had he come to the conclusion that it was just as well to submit to what seemed the inevitable and so enjoy the spice of revenge over me? My thoughts gave zest to my actions, and I was climbing the steep, pine-clad slope with rapidity when I heard Miss Trevor below me calling out to wait for her. At the point of our ascent the ridge of the tongue must have been four hundred feet above the level of the water, and from this place of vantage we could easily make out the Maria in the distance, and note from time to time the gain of the Sinclair.

"It wasn't fair of me, I know, to leave Marian," said Miss Trevor, apologetically, "but I simply couldn't resist the temptation to come up here."

"I hardly think she will bear you much ill will," I answered dryly; "you did the kindest thing possible. Who knows but what they are considering the advisability of an elopement!"

We passed a most enjoyable morning up there, all things taken into account, for the day was too perfect for worries. We even laughed at our hunger, which became keen about noon, as is always the case when one has nothing to eat; so we set out to explore the ridge for blackberries. These were so plentiful that I gathered a hatful for our friends



below, and then I lingered for a last look at the boats. I could make out but one. Was it the yacht? No; for there was a trace of smoke over it. And yet I was sure of a mast. I put my hand over my eyes.



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“What is it?” asked Miss Trevor, anxiously.

“The tug has the Maria in tow,” I said, “and they are coming this way.”

We scrambled down, sobered by this discovery and thinking of little else. And breaking through the bushes we came upon Miss Thorn and the Celebrity. To me, preoccupied with the knowledge that the tug would soon be upon us, there seemed nothing strange in the attitude of these two, but Miss Trevor remarked something out of the common at once. How keenly a woman scents a situation.

The Celebrity was standing with his back to Miss Thorn, at the edge of the water. His chin was in the air, and to a casual observer he looked to be minutely interested in a flock of gulls passing over us. And Miss Thorn? She was enthroned upon a heap of drift-wood, and when I caught sight of her face I forgot the very existence of the police captain. Her lips were parted in a smile.

“You are just in time, Irene,” she said calmly; “Mr. Allen has asked me to be his wife.”

I stood, with the hatful of berries in my hand, like a stiff wax figure in a museum. The expected had come at last; and how little do we expect the expected when it comes! I was aware that both the young women were looking at me, and that both were quietly laughing. And I must have cut a ridiculous figure indeed, though I have since been informed on good authority that this was not so. Much I cared then what happened. Then came Miss Trevor’s reply, and it seemed to shake the very foundations of my wits.

“But, Marian,” said she, “you can’t have him. He is engaged to me. And if it’s quite the same to you, I want him myself. It isn’t often, you know, that one has the opportunity to marry a Celebrity.”

The Celebrity turned around: an expression of extraordinary intelligence shot across his face, and I knew then that the hole in the well-nigh invulnerable armor of his conceit had been found at last. And Miss Thorn, of all people, had discovered it.

“Engaged to you?” she cried, “I can’t believe it. He would be untrue to everything he has written.”

“My word should be sufficient,” said Miss Trevor, stiffly. (May I be hung if they hadn’t acted it all out before.) “If you should wish proofs, however, I have several notes from him which are at your service, and an inscribed photograph. No, Marian,” she added, shaking her head, “I really cannot give him up.”

Miss Thorn rose and confronted him, and her dignity was inspiring. “Is this so?” she demanded; “is it true that you are engaged to marry Miss Trevor?”



The Bone of Contention was badly troubled. He had undoubtedly known what it was to have two women quarrelling over his hand at the same time, but I am willing to bet that the sensation of having them come together in his presence was new to him.

“I did not think—” he began. “I was not aware that Miss Trevor looked upon the matter in that light, and you know—”



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“What disgusting equivocation,” Miss Trevor interrupted. “He asked me point blank to marry him, and of course I consented. He has never mentioned to me that he wished to break the engagement, and I wouldn’t have broken it.”

I felt like a newsboy in a gallery,—I wanted to cheer. And the Celebrity kicked the stones and things.

“Who would have thought,” she persisted, “that the author of *The Sybarites*, the man who chose Desmond for a hero, could play thus idly with the heart of woman? The man who wrote these beautiful lines: ‘Inconstancy in a woman, because of the present social conditions, is sometimes pardonable. In a man, nothing is more despicable.’ And how poetic a justice it is that he has to marry me, and is thus forced to lead the life of self-denial he has conceived for his hero. Mr. Crocker, will you be my attorney if he should offer any objections?”

The humor of this proved too much for the three of us, and Miss Trevor herself went into peals of laughter. Would that the Celebrity could have seen his own face. I doubt if even he could have described it. But I wished for his sake that the earth might have kindly opened and taken him in.

“Marian,” said Miss Trevor, “I am going to be very generous. I relinquish the prize to you, and to you only. And I flatter myself there are not many girls in this world who would do it.”

“Thank you, Irene,” Miss Thorn replied gravely, “much as I want him, I could not think of depriving you.”

Well, there is a limit to all endurance, and the Celebrity had reached his.

“Crocker,” he said, “how far is it to the Canadian Pacific?”

I told him.

“I think I had best be starting,” said he.

And a moment later he had disappeared into the woods.

We stood gazing in the direction he had taken, until the sound of his progress had died away. The shock of it all had considerably muddled my brain, and when at last I had adjusted my thoughts to the new conditions, a sensation of relief, of happiness, of joy (call it what you will), came upon me, and I could scarce restrain an impulse to toss my hat in the air. He was gone at last! But that was not the reason. I was safe from O’Meara and calumny. Nor was this all. And I did not dare to look at Miss Thorn. The knowledge that she had planned and carried out with dignity and success such a



campaign filled me with awe. That I had misjudged her made me despise myself. Then I became aware that she was speaking to me, and I turned.

“Mr. Crocker, do you think there is any danger that he will lose his way?”

“No, Miss Thorn,” I replied; “he has only to get to the top of that ridge and strike the road for Saville, as I told him.”

We were silent again until Miss Trevor remarked:

“Well, he deserved every bit of it.”

“And more, Irene,” said Miss Thorn, laughing; “he deserved to marry you.”



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“I think he won’t come West again for a very long time,” said I.

Miss Trevor regarded me wickedly, and I knew what was coming.

“I hope you are convinced, now, Mr. Crocker, that our sex is not as black as you painted it: that Miss Thorn knew what she was about, and that she is not the inconsistent and variable creature you took her to be.”

I felt the blood rush to my face, and Miss Thorn, too, became scarlet. She went up to the mischievous Irene and grasping her arms from behind, bent them until she cried for mercy.

“How strong you are, Marian! It is an outrage to hurt me so. I haven’t said anything.” But she was incorrigible, and when she had twisted free she began again:

“I took it upon myself to speak a few parables to Mr. Crocker the other day. You know, Marian, that he is one of these level-headed old fogies who think women ought to be kept in a menagerie, behind bars, to be inspected on Saturday afternoons. Now, I appeal to you if it wouldn’t be disastrous to fall in love with a man of such ideas. And just to let you know what a literal old law-brief he is, when I said he had had a hat-pin sticking in him for several weeks, he nearly jumped overboard, and began to feel himself all over. Did you know that he actually believed you were doing your best to get married to the Celebrity?” (Here she dodged Miss Thorn again.) “Oh, yes, he confided in me. He used to worry himself ill over that. I’ll tell you what he said to me only—”

But fortunately at this juncture Miss Trevor was captured again, and Miss Thorn put her hand over her mouth. Heaven only knows what she would have said!

The two boats did not arrive until nearly four o’clock, owing to some trouble to the tug’s propeller. Not knowing what excuse my client might have given for leaving some of his party ashore, I thought it best to go out to meet them. Seated on the cabin roof of the Maria I beheld Mr. Cooke and McCann in conversation, each with a black cigar too big for him.

“Hello, Crocker, old man,” shouted my client, “did you think I was never coming back? I’ve had lots of sport out of this hayseed captain” (and he poked that official playfully), “but I didn’t get any grub. So we’ll have to go to Far Harbor.”

I caught the hint. Mr. Cooke had given out that he had started for Saville to restock the larder.

“No,” he continued, “Brass Buttons didn’t let me get to Saville. You see, when he got back to town last night they told him he had been buncoed out of the biggest thing for years, and they got it into his head that I was child enough to run a ferry for criminals.



They told him he wasn't the sleuth he thought he was, so he came back. They'll have the laugh on him now, for sure."

McCann listened with admirable good-nature, gravely pulling at his cigar, and eyeing Mr. Cooke with a friendly air of admiration.



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“Mr. Crocker,” he said, with melancholy humor, “it’s leery I am with the whole shooting-match. Mr. Cooke here is a gentleman, every inch of him, and so be you, Mr. Crocker. But I’m just after taking a look at the hole in the bottom of the boat. ‘Ye have yer bunks in queer places, Mr. Cooke,’ says I. It’s not for me to be doubting a gentleman’s word, sir, but I’m thinking me man is over the hills and far away, and that’s true for ye.”

Mr. Cooke winked expressively.

“McCann, you’ve been jerked,” said he. “Have another bottle!”

The Sinclair towed us to Far Harbor for a consideration, the wind being strong again from the south, and McCann was induced by the affable owner to remain on the yellow-plush yacht. I cornered him before we had gone a great distance.

“McCann,” said I, “what made you come back to-day?”

“Faith, Mr. Crocker, I don’t care if I am telling you. I always had a liking for you, sir, and bechune you and me it was that divil O’Meara what made all the trouble. I wasn’t taking his money, not me; the saints forbid! But glory be to God, if he didn’t raise a rumpus whin I come back without Allen! It was sure he was that the gent left that place, —what are ye calling it?—Mohair, in the Maria, and we telegraphs over to Asquith. He swore I’d lose me job if I didn’t fetch him to-day. Mr. Crocker, sir, it’s the lumber business I’ll be startin’ next week,” said McCann.

“Don’t let that worry you, McCann,” I answered. “I will see that you don’t lose your place, and I give you my word again that Charles Wrexell Allen has never been aboard this yacht, or at Mohair to my knowledge. What is more, I will prove it to-morrow to your satisfaction.”

McCann’s faith was touching.

“Ye’re not to say another word, sir,” he said, and he stuck out his big hand, which I grasped warmly.

My affection for McCann still remains a strong one.

After my talk with McCann I was sitting on the forecastle propped against the bits of the Maria’s anchor-chain, and looking at the swirling foam cast up by the tug’s propeller. There were many things I wished to turn over in my mind just then, but I had not long been in a state of reverie when I became conscious that Miss Thorn was standing beside me. I got to my feet.

“I have been wondering how long you would remain in that trance, Mr. Crocker,” she said. “Is it too much to ask what you were thinking of?”



Now it so chanced that I was thinking of her at that moment. It would never have done to say this, so I stammered. And Miss Thorn was a young woman of tact.

“I should not have put that to so literal a man as you,” she declared. “I fear that you are incapable of crossing swords. And then,” she added, with a slight hesitation that puzzled me, “I did not come up here to ask you that,—I came to get your opinion.”

“My opinion?” I repeated.



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“Not your legal opinion,” she replied, smiling, “but your opinion as a citizen, as an individual, if you have one. To be frank, I want your opinion of me. Do you happen to have such a thing?”

I had. But I was in no condition to give it.

“Do you think me a very wicked girl?” she asked, coloring. “You once thought me inconsistent, I believe, but I am not that. Have I done wrong in leading the Celebrity to the point where you saw him this morning?”

“Heaven forbid!” I cried fervently; “but you might have spared me a great deal had you let me into the secret.”

“Spared you a great deal,” said Miss Thorn. “I—I don’t quite understand.”

“Well—” I began, and there I stayed. All the words in the dictionary seemed to slip out of my grasp, and I foundered. I realized I had said something which even in my wildest moments I had not dared to think of. My secret was out before I knew I possessed it. Bad enough had I told it to Farrar in an unguarded second. But to her! I was blindly seeking some way of escape when she said softly:

“Did you really care?”

I am man enough, I hope, when there is need to be. And it matters not what I felt then, but the words came back to me.

“Marian,” I said, “I cared more than you will ever learn.”

But it seems that she had known all the time, almost since that night I had met her at the train. And how? I shall not pretend to answer, that being quite beyond me. I am very sure of one thing, however, which is that I never told a soul, man or woman, or even hinted at it. How was it possible when I didn’t know myself?

The light in the west was gone as we were pulled into Far Harbor, and the lamps of the little town twinkled brighter than I had ever seen them before. I think they must have been reflected in our faces, since Miss Trevor, when she came forward to look for us, saw something there and openly congratulated us. And this most embarrassing young woman demanded presently:

“How did it happen, Marian? Did you propose to him?”

I was about to protest indignantly, but Marian laid her hand on my arm.

“Tell it not in Asquith,” said she. “Irene, I won’t have him teased any more.”



We were drawing up to the dock, and for the first time I saw that a crowd was gathered there. The report of this chase had gone abroad. Some began calling out to McCann when we came within distance, among others the editor of the Northern Lights, and beside him I perceived with amusement the generous lines: of the person of Mr. O'Meara himself. I hurried back to give Farrar a hand with the ropes, and it was O'Meara who caught the one I flung ashore and wound it around a pile. The people pressed around, peering at our party on the Maria, and I heard McCann exhorting them to make way. And just then, as he was about to cross the plank, they parted for some one from behind. A breathless messenger halted at the edge of the wharf. He held out a telegram.

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McCann seized it and dived into the cabin, followed closely by my client and those of us who could push after. He tore open the envelope, his eye ran over the lines, and then he began to slap his thigh and turn around in a circle, like a man dazed.

“Whiskey!” shouted Mr. Cooke. “Get him a glass of Scotch!”

But McCann held up his hand.

“Holy Saint Patrick!” he said, in a husky voice, “it’s upset I am, bottom upwards. Will ye listen to this?”

“Drew is your man. Reddish hair and long side whiskers, gray clothes. Pretends to represent summer hotel syndicate. Allen at Asquith unknown and harmless.

“ (Signed.) Everhardt.”

“Sew me up,” said Mr. Cooke; “if that don’t beat hell!”

CHAPTER XXI

In this world of lies the good and the bad are so closely intermingled that frequently one is the means of obtaining the other. Therefore, I wish very freely to express my obligations to the Celebrity for any share he may have had in contributing to the greatest happiness of my life.

Marian and I were married the very next month, October, at my client’s palatial residence of Mohair. This was at Mr. Cooke’s earnest wish: and since Marian was Mrs. Cooke’s own niece, and an orphan, there seemed no good reason why my client should not be humored in the matter. As for Marian and me, we did not much care whether we were married at Mohair or the City of Mexico. Mrs. Cooke, I think, had a secret preference for Germantown.

Mr. Cooke quite over-reached himself in that wedding. “The knot was tied,” as the papers expressed it, “under a huge bell of yellow roses.” The paper also named the figure which the flowers and the collation and other things cost Mr. Cooke. A natural reticence forbids me to repeat it. But, lest my client should think that I undervalue his kindness, I will say that we had the grandest wedding ever seen in that part of the world. McCann was there, and Mr. Cooke saw to it that he had a punchbowl all to himself in which to drink our healths: Judge Short was there, still followed by the conjugal eye: and Senator Trevor, who remained over, in a new long black coat to kiss the bride. Mr. Cooke chartered two cars to carry guests from the East, besides those who came as ordinary citizens. Miss Trevor was of the party, and Farrar, of course, was



best man. Would that I had the flow of words possessed by the reporter of the Chicago Sunday newspaper!

But there is one thing I must mention before Mrs. Crocker and I leave for New York, in a shower of rice, on Mr. Cooke's own private car, and that is my client's gift. In addition to the check he gave Marian, he presented us with a huge, 'repousse' silver urn he had had made to order, and he expressed a desire that the design upon it should remind us of him forever and ever. I think it will. Mercury is duly set forth in a gorgeous equipage, driving four horses around the world at a furious pace; and the artist, by special instructions, had docked their tails.



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From New York, Mrs. Crocker and I went abroad. And it so chanced, in December, that we were staying a few days at a country-place in Sussex, and the subject of *The Sybarites* was broached at a dinner-party. The book was then having its sale in England.

"Crocker," said our host, "do you happen to have met the author of that book? He's an American."

I looked across the table at my wife, and we both laughed.

"I happen to know him intimately," I replied.

"Do you, now?" said the Englishman; "what a very entertaining chap he is, is he not? I had him down in October, and, by Jove, we were laughing the blessed time. He was telling us how he wrote his novels, and he said, 'pon my soul he did, that he had a secretary or something of that sort to whom he told the plot, and the secretary elaborated, you know, and wrote the draft. And he said, 'pon my honor, that sometimes the clark wrote the plot and all,—the whole blessed thing,—and that he never saw the book except to sign his name to it."

"You say he was here in October?" asked Marian, when the laugh had subsided.

"I have the date," answered our host, "for he left me an autograph copy of *The Sybarites* when he went away." And after dinner he showed us the book, with evident pride. Inscribed on the fly-leaf was the name of the author, October 10th. But a glance sufficed to convince both of us that the Celebrity had never written it.

"John," said Marian to me, a suspicion of the truth crossing her mind, "John, can it be the bicycle man?"

"Yes, it can be," I said; "it is."

"Well," said Marian, "he's been doing a little more for our friend than we did."

Nor was this the last we heard of that meteoric trip through England, which the alleged author of *The Sybarites* had indulged in. He did not go up to London; not he. It was given out that he was travelling for his health, that he did not wish to be lionized; and there were friends of the author in the metropolis who had never heard of his secretary, and who were at a loss to understand his conduct. They felt slighted. One of these told me that the Celebrity had been to a Lincolnshire estate where he had created a decided sensation by his riding to hounds, something the Celebrity had never been known to do. And before we crossed the Channel, Marian saw another autograph copy of the famous novel.



One day, some months afterwards, we were sitting in our little salon in a Paris hotel when a card was sent up, which Marian took.

“John,” she cried, “it’s the Celebrity.”

It was the Celebrity, in the flesh, faultlessly groomed and clothed, with frock coat, gloves, and stick. He looked the picture of ruddy, manly health and strength, and we saw at once that he bore no ill-will for the past. He congratulated us warmly, and it was my turn to offer him a cigarette. He was nothing loath to reminisce on the subject of his experiences in the wilds of the northern lakes, or even to laugh over them. He asked affectionately after his friend Cooke. Time had softened his feelings, and we learned that he had another girl, who was in Paris just then, and invited us on the spot to dine with her at “Joseph’s.” Let me say, in passing, that as usual she did credit to the Celebrity’s exceptional taste.



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“Now,” said he, “I have something to tell you two.”

He asked for another cigarette, and I laid the box beside him.

“I suppose you reached Saville all right,” I said, anticipating.

“Seven at night,” said he, “and so hungry that I ate what they call marble cake for supper, and a great many other things out of little side dishes, and nearly died of indigestion afterward. Then I took a train up to the main line. An express came along. ‘Why not go West?’ I asked myself, and I jumped aboard. It was another whim—you know I am subject to them. When I got to Victoria I wired for money and sailed to Japan; and then I went on to India and through the Suez, taking things easy. I fell in with some people I knew who were going where the spirit moved them, and I went along.

“Algiers, for one place, and whom do you think I saw there, in the lobby of a hotel?”

“Charles Wrexell Allen,” cried Marian and I together.

The Celebrity looked surprised. “How did you know?” he demanded.

“Go on with your story,” said Marian; “what did he do?”

“What did he do?” said the Celebrity; “why, the blackguard stepped up and shook me by the hand, and asked after my health, and wanted to know whether I were married yet. He was so beastly familiar that I took out my glass, and I got him into a cafe for fear some one would see me with him. ‘My dear fellow,’ said he, ‘you did me the turn of my life.—How can I ever repay you?’ ‘Hang your impudence,’ said I, but I wanted to hear what he had to say. ‘Don’t lose your temper, old chap,’ he laughed; ‘you took a few liberties with my name, and there was no good reason why I shouldn’t take some with yours. Was there? When I think of it, the thing was most decidedly convenient; it was the hand of Providence.’ ‘You took liberties with my name,’ I cried. With that he coolly called to the waiter to fill our glasses. ‘Now,’ said he, ‘I’ve got a story for you. Do you remember the cotillon, or whatever it was, that Cooke gave? Well, that was all in the Chicago papers, and the “Miles Standish” agent there saw it, and he knew pretty well that I wasn’t West. So he sent me the papers, just for fun. You may imagine my surprise when I read that I had been leading a dance out at Mohair, or some such barbarous place in the northwest. I looked it up on the map (Asquith, I mean), and then I began to think. I wondered who in the devil it might be who had taken my name and occupation, and all that. You see, I had just relieved the company of a little money, and it hit me like a clap of thunder one day that the idiot was you. But I couldn’t be sure. And as long as I had to get out very soon anyway, I concluded to go to Mohair and make certain, and then pile things off on you if you happened to be the man.”

At this point Marian and I were seized with laughter, in which the Celebrity himself joined. Presently he continued:

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“So I went,’ said Allen. ‘I provided myself with two disguises, as a careful man should, but by the time I reached that outlandish hole, Asquith, the little thing I was mixed up in burst prematurely, and the papers were full of it that morning. The whole place was out with sticks, so to speak, hunting for you. They told me the published description hit you to a dot, all except the scar, and they quarrelled about that. I posed as the promoter of resort syndicates, and I hired the Scimitar and sailed over to Bear Island; and I didn’t have a bad time that afternoon, only Cooke insisted on making remarks about my whiskers, and I was in mortal fear lest he might accidentally pull one off. He came cursed near it. By the way, he’s the very deuce of a man, isn’t he? I knew he took me for a detective, so I played the part. And in the night that ass of a state senator nearly gave me pneumonia by getting me out in the air to tell me they had hid you in a cave. So I sat up all night, and followed the relief party in the morning, and you nearly disfigured me for life when you threw that bottle into the woods. Then I went back to camp, and left so fast that I forgot my extra pair of red whiskers. I had two of each disguise, you know, so I didn’t miss them.

“I guess,’ Mr. Allen went on, gleefully, ‘that I got off about as cleanly as any criminal ever did, thanks to you. If we’d fixed the thing up between us it couldn’t have been any neater, could it? Because I went straight to Far Harbor and got you into a peck of trouble, right away, and then slipped quietly into Canada, and put on the outfit of a travelling salesman. And right here another bright idea struck me. Why not carry the thing farther? I knew that you had advertised a trip to Europe (why, the Lord only knows), so I went East and sailed for England on the Canadian Line. And let me thank you for a little sport I had in a quiet way as the author of *The Sybarites*. I think I astonished some of your friends, old boy.”

The Celebrity lighted another cigarette.

“So if it hadn’t been for me,” he said, “the ‘Miles Standish Bicycle Company’ wouldn’t have gone to the wall. Can they sentence me for assisting Allen to get away, Crocker? If they can, I believe I shall stay over here.”

“I think you are safe,” said I. “But didn’t Allen tell you any more?”

“No. A man he used to know came into the cafe, and Allen got out of the back door. And I never saw him again.”

“I believe I can tell you a little more,” said Marian.

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The Celebrity is still writing books of a high moral tone and unapproachable principle, and his popularity is undiminished. I have not heard, however, that he has given way to any more whims.