

***The Timber
Stower***

**Frederick William
Wallace**

Illustrated by

C. R. Patterson

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Title: The Timber Stower

Date of first publication: 1923

Author: Frederick William Wallace (1886-1958)

Illustrator: Charles R. Patterson

Date first posted: Sep. 15, 2022

Date last updated: Sep. 15, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220942

This eBook was produced by: John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

THE TIMBER STOWER

By FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES R. PATTERSON

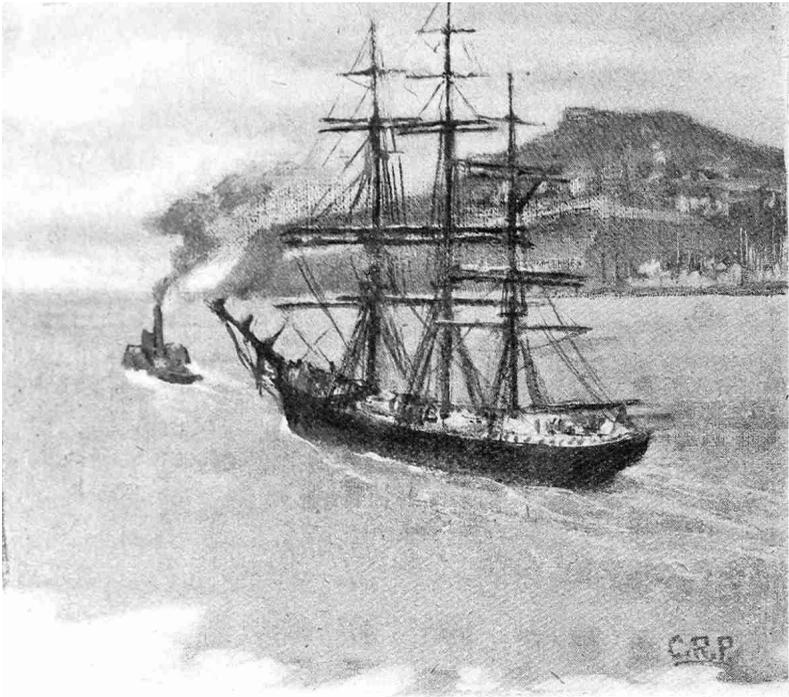
Shanandoar! I love yer daughter,
Away! My rolling river!
'Til the day I die, I'll love you ever,
Aha! We're bound away!
'Crost the Western Ocean!

—*Old Sailor Chantey.*

Captain Ezekiel Munro, Nova Scotian shipmaster, swore that managing daughter Dorothy was more of a task than putting a hard-bitten crowd of sailor-johns through their paces. And that was saying a lot. When Dot went to sea with him, impressionable second mates lost needful sleep in their watches below, and young sprigs of foremast hands washed their faces and became abstracted at times when such was a serious shipboard crime.

Old Man Munro had no sentiment in his make-up, not for sailors at any rate, and he acquired considerable skill in correcting youthful respectives and in quenching the matrimonial ambitions of penurious junior officers. And a Nova Scotian shipmaster of the square-rig days could do this to the King's taste. Daughter Dorothy was blissfully ignorant of the havoc she wrought with sailor hearts and Bluenose discipline, from which it is to be inferred that she possessed feminine attributes and charms considerably above the average.

The full-rigged ship *Wanderer* of Anchorville, N. S., with Ezekiel Munro in command and Dorothy aboard, was towing up to Quebec for a cargo of square timber. In the grip of a tug, the ship was stemming the ebb tide running strong through the Traverses of the River St. Lawrence and making slow progress. It was black dark and raining, and there was a chill spite in the squally September wind, which hounded the sea-bound flood of the mighty waterway, and added to the labor of the old *Hercule* hauling away at the big ballast-laden Bluenose trailing at the end of her tow-rope. Until slack water and the turn of the tide, progress would be slow.



In the grip of a tug, the ship was stemming the ebb tide running strong through the Traverses of the River St. Lawrence and making slow progress.

Peering into the blustery darkness, Dorothy Munro stood half inside the chart-house doorway cheerfully crooning a little song to herself. Rain glistened on the sou'wester she wore and on the neat oilskin coat that clothed her, and the scanty glimmer of the oil lamp revealed a twenty-year-old sea-nymph with a lithe and graceful contour of form that heavy weather clothing failed to conceal. The tang of the river wind heightened the soft glow of cheeks and the healthy complexion nourished from childhood by the cosmetics of Fundy fogs and the sea breeze through the spruce.

“She said, ‘You lime-juice shell-back,
Now see me home you may.’
And when I reached her cottage door,
She unto me did say:—

‘Away, you Santee! My dear Annie!
Oh, you New York girls, can’t you dance the polka?’ ”

oftly singing the sailor chantey to herself, and with her blue eyes watering in the nip of the wind and some vagrant locks of brown hair blowing across her rain-drenched face, she braved the weather with a feeling of exhilaration. The tug had the tow-rope and the end of the voyage was in sight, with Quebec, the ancient, the picturesque storied and romantic, as the ship's resting place for a while. Forty days of passage from Liverpool seemed over-long—nothing to a sailor, to be sure, when the more days meant the more dollars to lift on pay day, but to a vivacious young woman of twenty, alone with her father and twenty-two men, forty days of shipboard and blank ocean was an eternity.



Dorothy "Dot" Munro

It was a dirty night on the river, a night when the devil might well be abroad looking for sailors' souls, and the squally breeze was thrumming in the gear of the *Wanderer's* tall masts, sounding eerie notes. Overside, the tidal current was swirling around the ship's hull and the noises of wind and

water were accentuated by the dull roaring of the steam from the *Hercule's* exhaust. Occasionally, the whiff of burning coal came down the wind—an offence to the senses—but Dot sniffed at it appreciatively. “Pull away, old horsie, and get the ship and me alongside the good dry land once more!” She uttered the encouraging words aloud and laughed.

As the trill of her happiness was wafted to leeward, a bulky figure in dripping oil-clothes swung away from the rail and stepped toward the chart-house. Other persons tenanted the poop—Captain Munro, the pilot, and the wheel’s-man—but they were far aft and invisible in the murk. “Quebec tomorrow, Dot, if all goes well. You won’t be sorry?” It was Victor Crosby, mate of the ship, who spoke. His tone was low and guarded. “Sorry? No, indeed, Vic. Forty days of these northern seas is long enough—cold, rain, grey skies and head winds. Ugh!” She made an impatient gesture. “I’ll be mighty glad to see another woman again after being cooped up with a crowd of men.” She paused. “Isn’t it a wretched night?”

The other showed a gleam of white teeth in the darkness. “Fall weather,” he murmured; “but it’ll be fine to-morrow and you will have a town to run around in.” He spoke with a decided English accent and in a voice that was mellow and pleasing.

“I wouldn’t care if it were only a collection of shacks on a sand bar—” observed the girl.

“And no shops?” the officer queried.

“Well, at least give me one real shop with a box of ribbons and laces and some dress material in it. M-m-m!” She sniffed at the rain-laden air, “But it’s good to smell the land and to know that it is all around us. I feel like singing, shouting! To know that Quebec is but fifty miles ahead is like rest after toil, port after stormy seas.’ You know the saying.”

The man reached inside his oil-coat and drew out a pipe. Rubbing the bowl slowly, he spoke somewhat wistfully: “Are you so eager, Dot, to have the passage come to an end? Port for me means work from morning until night and but little chance to see you.”

“Don’t let us worry about that,” said the girl hastily. A slashing squall of wind and rain caused her to retreat within the shelter of the chart-house, and the officer, with a covert glance to the formless group aft by the wheel followed her inside. Divesting himself of his hat, he swung the water off it and turned towards the shaded lamp. In the tempered glow, his rain-wet face

showed strikingly handsome—unusually so. A man in the thirties, with the lineaments of Greek statuary, his was a face that would startle observers calling for the mate of a hard-driving Nova Scotiaman. Together, in the chart-room, the woman and the man appeared in form and features as being favored of the gods. Sea deities, in modern garb, from out the legends of Aegean mythology. The immortals were cold and expressionless, however; these two were radiant with life.

As Crosby lit his pipe and blew out the tobacco smoke from his lips, Dot's eyes seemed alight with a glow of reverent admiration as she gazed at him. The damp air enhanced the waviness of the crisp black hair growing back from the high white forehead, and the large dark-brown eyes, half-closed with the weariness of long hours of watching, gave his face the aspect of a dreamer. But beneath the heavily lashed lids, the eyes were alive and bright, unfathomable, quick-changing in the light and expression of the owner's moods. He was clean-shaven, square-chinned and determined—a man of purpose—and his Byronic beauty, his strapping body and evident virility made him one of the finest specimens of manhood that ever stepped a ship's deck. Soft-voiced, calm, and capable—a sailor to turn maid's hearts, forsooth—such was Victor Crosby, English-born, by his own account, and mate of the ship *Wanderer* these four months.

A wilder blast of wind drove the rain rattling on the chart-house windows. The river gods were fretful to-night and the phantom paddlemen of Indian legend were convoying the big ship, dipping their ghostly blades into the black water and howling their war cries into the teeth of the gale. So it seemed to Dorothy's romantic soul, inspired by thoughts of old St. Lawrence history, wherein bold St. Malo mariners braved the unknown and might well have harbored such fancies o' nights when the Traverse tides were rushing and growling in the dark. "Hush!" she cautioned. A hail sounded in the gloom outside. "That's father shouting."

The mate clamped his sou'wester over his head and leaned toward her. "I'll have to go now, Dorothy, and the voyage is coming to an end. I may not see you alone for weeks." His arm slipped around her shoulders and there was sudden passion in the low tones of his voice. "A kiss, dear one—I'm hungry for the sweet taste of your lips."

"Mister Crosby!" The stentorian bawl of Captain Munro sounded strident above the swish of the rain and the drumming of the wind in the ship's rigging.

“A kiss sweetheart.” The girl seemed fascinated and unresistingly allowed herself to be drawn into Crosby’s embrace, her face turned upwards to his, her blue eyes wide and with a hint of fright in them.

“Crosby! Damn the man! Where has he got to?” The irritable hail came louder. Captain Munro was coming forward. Smothering an expletive, the handsome mate hastily drew his arm away from Dot’s shoulders and swung outside with a respectful, “Yes, sir, coming, sir!”

“Stand by and see what that fellow wants. There’s a boat hooked on alongside and they’re hailing for a ladder. If it’s a Quebec runner after the men, don’t let him aboard. He’ll have liquor with him and they’d all be drunk afore morning.”

“A boat alongside on such a night?” Her curiosity aroused, Dot buttoned her coat around her throat and ventured to the rail. Peering forward over the ship’s side, she could discern a small open boat plunging and rolling in the wash of the ship’s passage and the rough water of the Traverse current. The boat’s crew had hooked a grapnel into the *Wanderer’s* forerigging and the little craft was towing with the ship—a deluge of spray flying over its occupants every now and again.

“Dat’ll be Larry O’Brien for sure,” observed the French-Canadian pilot. “He’s de onlee crazee man dat come for pick up a sheep ’way down in de Traverse on night lak’ dees. Som tam’ he’ll drown sure t’ing—”

“What’s he after,” growled the skipper.

“He’s a timber stower,” answered the pilot. “He’s come down here for catch de job of stowing your cargo.”

“Oh!” The captain strode to the poop-break and hailed the mate who was forward.

“If that’s a stevedore, let him board.”

Dorothy was interested in the occupants of the small craft alongside. There was something heroic in the sudden coming of these visitors from off the dark and stormy river and she was eager to vision what men they were who came drumming for business in an open boat in such a night.

In a few minutes one of the strangers strode aft preceded by Crosby. As he came up the ladder, the newcomer gave Dot a quick glance and passed on towards her father. “Dirty weather, Cap’en but I’m thinking it’ll clear before morning.” The Man-of-the-Boat spoke with a strong flavor of the

Irish in his speech. “Me name’s O’Brien. I have a timber stowin’ and stevedorin’ outfit in Quebec.” Captain Munro grasped the other’s outstretched hand. “Dirty weather, sure enough, Mister, but we’ve got to take what comes,” he remarked.

“You’re a durn long ways from Quebec, Mister.”

“Yes! Quite a pull—nigh fifty miles from the city. We’ve been in the boat since five this morning.”

“Come below and have a cup of tea and warm-up.” invited the shipmaster. Both men left the deck.

Dorothy had come close to the stranger while he was talking and she was curious to see him. He was young, she knew instinctively, and he was of burly build and pleasant speech—an Irish Canadian. The darkness veiled all else. To satisfy her curiosity and possibly to set eyes on a new face after forty days of the familiar ones of shipboard she slipped down the after companion and entered the cabin.

The Quebecker was seated in front of the stove. He had divested himself of a steaming oilskin coat but his clothing was sodden with water and wet splotches appeared on the carpet below where he sat.

“Sure and there’s a touch of the Fall in the wind to-night Cap’en,” he was saying as he warmed his hands at the stove, “and I wasn’t sorry to see you comin’ along.”

The girl entered the apartment and the man looked up at her. Her glance took in the broad-shouldered fellow of between thirty and thirty-five, of medium height, reddish hair and a ruddy, sun-bronzed skin. He was clean-shaven, and twinkling blue eyes set in a strong and pleasant face seemed to open wider in astonishment or admiration as she entered, while the large, but not unhandsome, mouth gave expression to a smile. He rose to his feet and looked from the father to the daughter.

“My girl, Mister.” The captain gave a jerk of his head in Dot’s direction.

“O’Brien is my name, Miss.” said the other quickly, he looked boldly into Dot’s eyes. “Lawrence O’Brien, Miss, and at your service!” He made a courtly bow and favored her once more with his clear stare.

Dot acknowledged the introduction simply. She was used to meeting men—at least on shipboard—and neither simpered nor blushed, but the searching and admiring quality of the other’s gaze, however, somewhat

disconcerted her. He retired from his chair by the stove and proffered it to her. "You'll be seated, Miss, and warm yourself," he invited. The man spoke with ease and there was nothing awkward in his deportment.

"Thank you, but I'll shed this wet coat first," she answered smiling, for she liked the Irishman's face and manner, "You may keep your seat."

O'Brien reached inside of his jacket and produced a folded newspaper. "Yesterday's *Chronicle*," he said as he presented it to her. "You might like to look it over."

She took the paper eagerly, murmuring her thanks, and passed on towards her room. The young man's eyes followed her retreating figure. "Naow, about this job of timber stowing—" Captain Munro spoke a trifle sharply and O'Brien came back to the business in hand.

The Nova Scotian was a hard driver in more ways than one and hadn't acquired a modest competence without the exercise of those qualities inherent in the Scotch. He knew all the tricks of bargaining with stevedores and prepared for a tough session, but, in this case, he was surprised to find his terms accepted without a murmur. Meantime the steward had set out the tea cups, some biscuits and cold salt beef, the bargain had been struck and the Irishman was given the contract to discharge the *Wanderer's* ballast lading of coarse salt in bulk, and stow her cargo of square timber and deals. Feeling extremely pleased with himself, the shipmaster invited the stevedore to make himself at home and to turn in to a square cabin bunk whenever he felt like it. Then gulping his hot tea, he pulled on his oilskins and returned to the deck.

"Godfrey, now, but that's a fine little colleen aboard here," said O'Brien to himself when the skipper had gone. "And like a fool, Larry, me boy, we've allowed this Bluenose to skin ye to the ballast because the soft heart of ye has been smitten by the skipper's daughter. A pretty girl gives ye a smile and ye immediately lose all the profit of a good payin' job. Wirra! but it's the strong back of ye that'll pay for yer foolishness if the O'Brien outfit's to keep to wind'ard of the sheriff. But she's a dandy fine—."

At this juncture of his musings, Dorothy emerged from her room with the newspaper in her hand. Woman-like, she had overhauled her hair and had discarded her woolen jersey for a blouse. She did not know why she should have bothered to do this, or why she should evince any sign of interest in this Quebec stevedore, but there was some quality in him that attracted her—perhaps it was the man's hardihood and daring in venturing

out in an open boat in such weather to seek business, or it may be that she was satisfying the natural longings of sea-voyagers to renew their links with the land. She returned the newspaper with a word or two of thanks, and slipped into the chair vacated by her father.

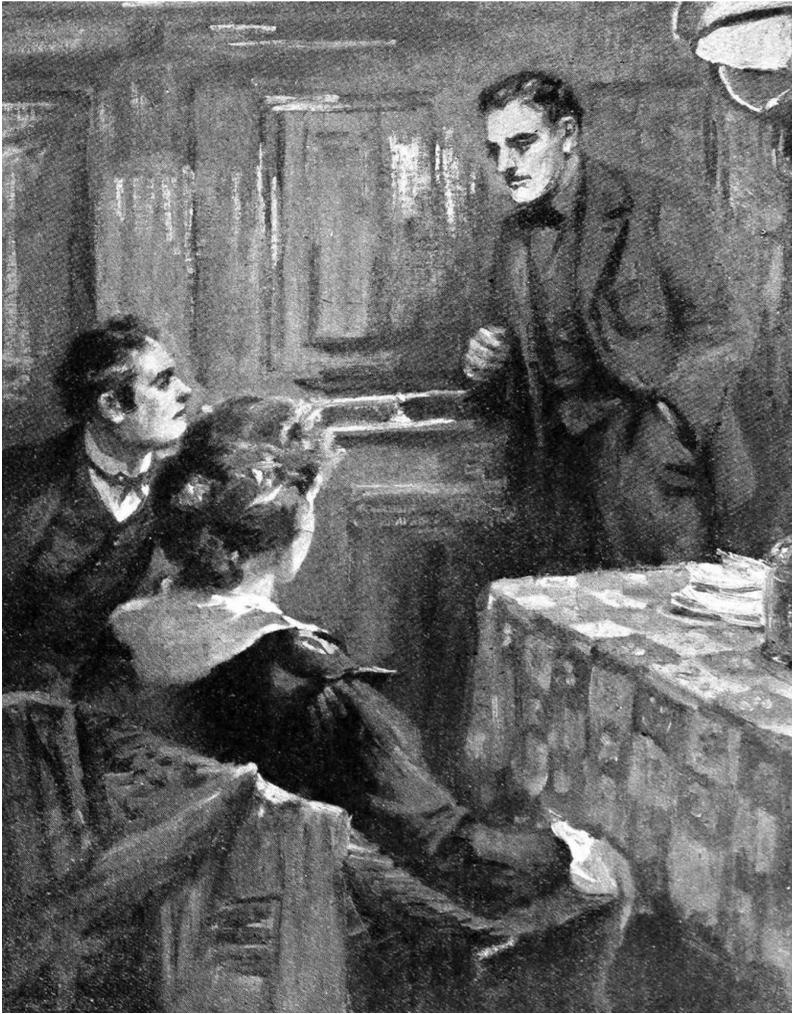
“You are a Quebecker, I presume, Mr. O’Brien?” “Born and bred there, Miss,” answered the stevedore.

She held out her hands towards the stove. “I am looking forward to seeing Quebec and visiting the historical places,” she continued. “Before my mother died and I commenced keeping father company at sea, I was a school-teacher. The early settlement of Quebec and its conquest always fascinated me.”

The Irishman’s face became animated. “Ah,” he said, and there was a suppressed eagerness in his voice, “and it’s the great pleasure I would take in showing you around, Miss, for I know every stick and stone in the town and the history thereof from the time Jacques Cartier and Champlain dropped anchor off Cape Diamond.”

The girl gave no sign that she had comprehended the invitation in O’Brien’s words. The latter with his gaze upon her face, went on: “There’s the Cove, now, where Wolfe’s soldiers landed when they attacked the French—we’ll be loading the ship close by there. And on the high land just above is where the battle was fought between Wolfe and Montcalm. . . .” The man spoke interestingly and it was evident that he had an intimate knowledge of the events which made Quebec famous. With the Irishman’s gift of rhetoric, his descriptions were vivid, fascinating and couched in language which bespoke some measure of education not usually associated with the trade of stevedore. Dorothy’s reserve broke down as she listened with almost rapt attention.

“Sure, but I’m the awful talker, Miss,” he concluded, “and me tongue clacks like a wind-mill pump, but, if your father will allow, as soon as I get me gang started on the salt ballast, I’ll count it a great pleasure and honor to spend a day showing you the places I’ve been speaking of.”



Then Victor Crosby, divested of his oil-clothes, came into the cabin where they sat.

Eight bells struck and someone clattered down the cabin companion. There was the clump of heavily-booted feet on the deck above as the wheel-relief went aft. Then Victor Crosby, divested of his oil-clothes, came into the cabin where they sat.

In the bright glow from the cabin he stood respectfully hesitant—a splendid figure of a man. The Irishman glanced up at him quickly and seemed to catch his breath for an instant. An odd light came into his eyes, the large mouth compressed slightly, and a faint bulge showed in the muscles of his jaw as he rose to his feet. Dorothy swung around in her chair.

“Have you met Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Crosby? Mr. Crosby is the chief officer.” The mate inclined his head slightly and acknowledged the introduction in his soft voice. He did not proffer his hand, nor did O’Brien, who merely grunted. The girl glanced at the cabin clock and rose to her feet. “Time I was in bed—midnight is late aboard ship for an ‘idler.’ I’ll bid you both good-night.” Her gaze rested on the mate for a moment and there was a hint of admiration in their blue depths which O’Brien was quick to notice. She proceeded to her room and as the stevedore made way for her, she said, “I’ll probably accept your kind offer to act as my guide around Quebec, sir. I hope you’ll be able to rest up after your long and strenuous day, in an open boat, on the river.”

The Irishman smiled. “Sure, Miss, and I’m rested already.” Both men watched her go, and when her door clicked shut, each wheeled and faced the other. There was aggressiveness in the stevedore’s attitude, his heavy jaw was thrust out, the corners of his mouth were turned down in a resentful sneer, and his hands were clenched. Crosby stood erect, his six feet of splendid manhood, contemptuous smile on his clean-cut features and the half-closed eyes, dreamy yet alert, surveyed the other in much the same manner as one would gaze at a dog worrying a bone. For a space they stood thus and then the Irishman spoke.

“Where the divil did you spring from?” he growled.

Crosby bared his fine teeth in a smile. “I don’t suppose you are glad to see me, O’Brien,” he said in his soft tones, then significantly: “I wonder if you recall the name of the ship you and I were together on?”

The other’s eyes dropped, he seemed to waver. Nervously, his hands relaxed and groped aimlessly for the back of a chair. “The *Rienzi*?” he spoke huskily.

Crosby still smiling, answered calmly, “Aye, the *Rienzi*.” He paused and gazed steadily at the stevedore. “And say,” he continued in soft-voiced menace, “you take my tip and keep away from Miss Munro. She don’t want to know your kind. Mind that!”

And slowly turning, he went to his berth, leaving O’Brien standing dazed-like, as though stunned by an evil memory of the past.

The *Wanderer* lay at the Salt Sheds discharging her ballast lading of coarse salt. Tubs, slung to yardarm tackles, swung between dock and

hold, and down inside the ship's cavernous interior, Irish and French-Canadian ship-laborers shovelled vigorously—pausing only to draw breath when the hail of "Heave up!" gave them a momentary respite ere another tub came plunging down.

O'Brien, in his working clothes, stood at the combings of the main hatch passing the signals to his winch-man. Crosby, keeping tally of the tubs of salt, loafed below the poop-break whistling quietly to himself and wondering how he would get a chance to see Dorothy. She lived aboard the ship and he saw her for a few minutes at breakfast. During the day, she was ashore with her father, and her evenings were spent in the after cabin with her parent. The mate, desperately in love, mentally cursed the skipper's desire for his daughter's company and wished that he would drink or find some longshore attraction to release her for an hour or two.

The shore whistles blew for twelve o'clock and labor ceased for the noon meal. Crosby closed his tally book, jammed it into his pocket, and made to enter the cabin when a hail from the stevedore arrested him. "Yes?"

The Irishman stepped unhurriedly towards him and there was a pugnacious glint in his clear blue eyes and a hard set to mouth and jaw. "Say, Crosby!" He spoke slowly, fixing the other with a hostile gaze. "I just want to tell you that I'm after takin' Miss Munro around town to-morrow, so—you—be—damned!" He uttered the last words with emphatic pauses, favored the mate with a sneering stare, then turned on his heel and strode away.

The officer watched him leap up on the rail and descend the gangway to the dock. "The Irish swine!" he muttered angrily, the color slowly mounting into his handsome face. "I should have banged the face off him." For a moment, the muscles of his splendid body tensed with rage and his hands clenched, then reason asserted itself and he became suddenly cool and calm. "A mighty held man you are, my bucko, to heave your threats at me." he muttered. "You're setting for Dot, no matter what happens, eh? Then I'll spike your guns, my bully!" And he entered the cabin for dinner.

The two men worked on deck during the afternoon but neither spoke to each other. Six o'clock came and O'Brien donned his coat and went ashore. Crosby watched him with calm, calculating eyes. "Why should I bother myself about that fellow," he muttered. "She's mine, heart and soul, and this joker could never take her from me. She'd never think of him being anything better than what he is—a rough and tough Irish gaffer of a

stevedore's gang. Tcha, Victor Crosby—you're a fool!" He chided himself for permitting the thing to annoy him, and spying the skipper and Dorothy coming aboard, he went to the gangway to meet them.

Captain Munro talked briefly with the mate on ship matters and then went into the cabin. Dorothy, pretty as a picture in her go-ashore clothes, gave a furtive glance after her father and turned to Crosby. She had not spoken to him alone since the night in the chart-house. "When shall I have a chance to have you to myself for a while?" he questioned eagerly. "Suppose I got a day off to-morrow, will you allow me to take you around Quebec to some of the places?"

The young woman looked perplexed. "Not to-morrow, Victor. Mr. O'Brien has invited me to go with him to-morrow. Why not another day?"

"To-morrow would suit me better, Dot," replied the other. "The second mate will relieve me and work is well in hand. I've made preparations for a day off."

"Did you speak to father?"

"No, but I'll ask his permission to-night."

Dorothy grew sober faced. "You'd have to get his permission to let me accompany you, and I'm afraid he'll refuse you. He is the kindest and best father in the world but he has some strict ideas regarding myself. Then there's Mr. O'Brien. I have accepted his invitation for to-morrow and father has given me permission to go. I can't get out of that. It would be extremely discourteous."

The mate fixed his dark eyes on hers. There was a magnetism in his gaze that seemed to dominate her. He smiled, showing his fine teeth. "I'll fix it all up with your father and O'Brien," he said confidently. "Leave it entirely in my hands."

"You seem very sure of yourself, Victor," remarked Dorothy, breaking away from his compelling gaze. "I—I'm afraid—"

He came nearer to her and caught at her gloved hands. "Tell me, Dorothy, do you love me?" He spoke in low tones, almost a whisper. "I—I like you, Victor," the answer came hesitatingly.

"Would you marry me when the time comes?"

She turned towards him, smiling. "*That*, is something I haven't considered yet. You mustn't be so pressing."

He seemed a trifle nonplused and his face clouded. "I can hope, Dorothy?" he said quietly.

"Hope springs eternal," she quoted, laughing. "Possibly, when you are in command of your own ship and when my father favors you as a son-in-law, then you may ask me." She drew her hands out of his grasp. "I must run along now," she added, "or father will be calling for me. Good-bye for the present, and," she paused, "good luck."

The mate watched her enter the cabin and then he turned and began pacing the deck, hands in pockets, and whistling softly to himself. "The little devil has me knocked galley-west," he murmured, after a spell of promenading. "She's as artless as they make 'em, pretty as a picture, and a rare sheet anchor for some lucky man. And, Victor Crosby, if you can't land her—?" He left the thought unfinished and leaned over the rail, staring up at the Citadel.

After supper, Crosby sought the Captain. The shipmaster was walking the poop in his carpet slippers and smoking a long clay pipe. He was a short, stocky man of fifty-five—a Cape Breton Scotchman who had built ships and sailed them and amassed a few worth-while dollars in his ventures. Almost bald and clean-shaven save for a short goatee beard, he might be taken for a prosperous farmer at first glance, but the keen steel-gray eyes framed by bushy brows were hard in expression and held the glint of command. Every line of his leathery, high-cheeked visage repulsed familiarity.

"Captain, sir!" began the mate without any hesitation. "I'd like a day ashore to-morrow to look over Quebec. The second mate'll relieve me and the ship's all right. Have I your permission to go?"

The skipper shot him a quick glance through narrowed lids. Without taking the pipe out of his mouth, he spoke in a rasping voice.

"Aye, Mister, you want to go ashore to-morrow? Well, ye kin go, and ye kin go for good. I'm discharging you."

"What!" The other staggered as though shot. Consternation spread over his handsome countenance and he almost gasped the ejaculation. "Did I hear you right, sir?"

"Ye did!" laconically grunted the shipmaster, puffing away.

"In God's name, what am I being sacked for?" questioned Crosby, his wits still floundering. "Ain't I doing my work to suit you?"

“I’ve had worse mates,” replied the other brusquely, resuming his three steps and a turn, “but I’ll give you a good reference if you want one.”

“But—but, sir, you must have a good reason for sending me off. What is it, sir?”

Captain Munro fixed the handsome officer with a hard stare. “I’m letting you go, Mister, because you’re paying too damned much attention to that girl of mine.”

With the information, the other seemed to recover his poise. “How do you make that out, sir? I’ve been civil and obliging only—”

“Even to the extent of making love to her,” interrupted the skipper. “My eyesight and my hearing is still good, Mister, and I’ve seen you and her lally-gagging around the decks of a night. I’m not paying mates to entertain my daughter.”

A flush spread over the officer’s features and he retorted with some heat. “Is it a crime for a man to love a woman, sir? What are your objections to me?”

The Nova Scotian stopped in his pacing. “Who the devil are you anyhow? You’ve only been with me four months. Where d’ye hail from? Who’s yer folks? Have ye any money?”

“I’m an Englishman, sir. My father was a lieutenant in the British Navy and of good family. My mother died when I was a child and I went into the Navy as a boy. My father is now dead, but Sir Vernon Crosby, of Crosby Hall, Yorkshire, is my uncle. I have no money, but I have expectations.” He stood erect, respectful and dignified, speaking calmly. The shipmaster eyed him keenly through squinting lids.

“Uh-huh!” He was puffing at his pipe again and his words came harsh and biting. “That may be so, I won’t deny, but you’re too dern sprucey-looking to be virtuous enough for my girl. And, furthermore, with your high family connections and your British Navy service, how is it you come aboard me in Antwerp in a slop-chest rig-out and a Belgian trollop seeing you to the gangway?”

“I’m a good-living man, sir!” said Crosby indignantly.

“Well, we’ll let it go at that,” said the captain. “It don’t signify anything, anyway. The fact is I don’t want you for a son-in-law and I won’t have you for mate. You’ll clear your gear out in the morning and I’ll pay you off with

a good discharge. That'll be all, Mister." And he waved his pipe-stem in a gesture of dismissal.

The mate was about to say something more, but he knew enough of Munro to realize that further pleading was useless. He walked to the fore end of the poop and leaned over the rail. Searching for his pipe, he found it and stuck it between his teeth unlighted. He saw the captain go below and heard Dot playing on her mandolin. The whole fabric of his hopes and desires had been swept away but he kept admirable control of himself. He must see Dorothy.

After a while, he went below to his berth. Miss Munro was in her father's room playing and singing, and as he listened to her song, his blood seemed afire. The skipper's harsh words repeated themselves over and over in his brain and excited him so that he quivered with suppressed anger. The blood mounted into his clear-skinned face, his fists clenched and his teeth crunched on the pipe-stem so that it broke off and clattered to the floor. For a minute or so, he stood erect in the centre of his room, his face working convulsively, and his muscles tensed in silent fury. Then he relaxed, laughed quietly to himself, sought out a new pipe and threw himself on to his bunk, to think.

With ears intent on the snatches of conversation emanating from the captain's quarters, he smoked and devised plans for the future. Once clear of the *Wanderer* it would be difficult to see the woman he loved. He would have to get another berth soon, as his month's pay of fifty dollars wouldn't last long ashore. The outlook seemed pretty black. Captain Munro, in suddenly dismissing him, had effectually put an end to all his hopes.

Then his thoughts turned to O'Brien and an idea flashed into his brain. After a moment's pondering he jumped up, brushed his dishevelled hair and put on his hat and coat. Outside of his room door, he paused and listened. Dot and her father were playing cribbage—a nightly amusement which Crosby detested. There was no chance of him seeing or communicating with her that night. Captain Munro would see to that.

From the watchman on the dock he secured the stevedore's address. It was in the lower town and not far away. Within fifteen minutes he reached the house and was knocking on the door. He noticed that the place was of a substantial character—a two-storey wooden house painted yellow and with

green latticed shutters. The street was narrow and steep but it was a quiet one. Evidently O'Brien was a man of substance and, perhaps, respectability.

A pleasant-faced elderly lady answered his knock and the mate doffed his hat politely. "I would like to speak with Mr. O'Brien, ma'am," he said. "Will ye step inside, Mister?"

Crosby hesitated. "No, I think not," he replied. "Just want a word with him here."

"Sure and it's much the pleasanter to talk in the house than on the doorstep, Mister—" the old lady began when O'Brien's voice sounded from the hall.

"That's all right, mother, I'll spake to that man outside." And the stevedore in his shirt-sleeves and with slippers on his feet came out to the front and drew the door shut as his mother retired.

"Well?" The question came harshly and the expression on the Irishman's face was hostile and defiant.

Crosby smiled pleasantly. "Don't be angry, Captain," he said, in quiet tones. "I've come to see if you'll do me a small service."

"Aye?" The other's eyebrows went up but the hostile look still remained.

"You and I were old shipmates, Captain," continued the other ingratiatingly, "and I'm coming to you to help me out. Briefly, old man Munro is letting me go and I'll be out of the ship in the morning. No, I'm not going to ask you to get me a job or anything of that nature, but, to come to the point, I want you to help me in seeing Miss Munro."

O'Brien's brows contracted in perplexity and he regarded the other with an odd look in his eyes. "Help ye to see Miss Munro?" he questioned. "And for why?"

"I'm in love with her, O'Brien," returned Crosby frankly, "and she loves me. Her old man fired me because of that, and my chances of seeing her again are mighty small if I don't get your assistance."

The Irishman's face was a study in fleeting expressions. "Uh-huh," he said, "and how d'ye think I can help ye?"

Crosby began tapping the iron railing of the steps with his fingers and his gaze wandered down the street. With his eyes averted, he answered briefly: "Invite her ashore and give me a chance to meet her alone. You're

taking her around to-morrow. Let me take your place. She's nothing to you, but everything to me." His voice was tense with feeling.

The other nodded. "Uh-huh! and supposin' I don't fall in with your scheme, what happens then?"

The mate smiled oddly and fixed O'Brien with his dark eyes. "Oh, you'll help me, Captain," he said confidently.

"Don't you call me 'Captain'," broke in the other menacingly.

Crosby gave a short laugh. "Alright, I won't. I don't imagine you like to be reminded of that. But, you help me, and I'll maybe do you a favor in return."

There was a harsh twist to the stevedore's features at this and his words came softly as if between shut teeth. "By kaping quiet about the *Rienzi* affair, I suppose?"

"It was a nasty business, that," returned the other significantly. "I don't see how you could remain here if that story got around."

O'Brien folded his arms across his chest and regarded Crosby with an expression at once defiant, determined and suggestively menacing. "Let me tell you, Crosby," he said stridently, "that I'll remain around here as long as I have a mind to, even though ivery man, woman and child in Quebec knew the *Rienzi* story. And, furthermore, ye'll get no manner of help from me in meeting, Miss Munro, and that's *that!*"

The Englishman revealed his white teeth in a smile, though somewhat abashed. "Come, come, O'Brien, you're no fool. The girl is nothing to you but a chance acquaintance. Take her around as much as possible, but give me a chance to speak with her. You'll do that, I'm sure, for me, your old mate—of the *Rienzi*." There was a subtle meaning in the last words which, softly spoken, veiled a threat.

"I will *not!*" came the decisive answer, "and there's an end to it." O'Brien turned and grasped the handle of the door and, before entering his home, he addressed the other finally: "And now, get a skinful of bug-juice aboard of yez and spill yer *Rienzi* story all over the waterfront. It'll make a pleasant yarn for the lumpers and sunfish to chew over. And when ye've done that, take me tip and clear out of Quebec, for ye'll not draw many breaths if I get hold of ye." And so concluding, he slammed the door shut.

Crosby stood staring at the wooden panels of the barrier for a moment. He evinced no anger at the rebuff but seemed to take it with remarkable

coolness. Then his lips curled in an odd smile and he gave a jerk of the head. “Huh! I see how the land lays now. He’s in love with Dot himself. . . . I’ll have to play another game.”

Dorothy received the news of Crosby’s dismissal with a storm of tears and protestations. She had spent the day with O’Brien driving around Quebec in a *calèche* and knew nothing of what had happened. The trip around the Ancient Capital had been enjoyable, the day was ideal, and the stevedore was an attractive companion—well-informed, courteous and interesting. She liked the man very much, but the handsome Crosby dominated her thoughts and her heart fluttered and beat the faster whenever she thought of him.

Then when O’Brien had left her on the ship that evening, she noticed the absence of the mate. Her father read her thoughts and with all the sympathy and kindness he was capable of, he broke the news. “I’m sorry. Dot, my dear,” he said, “but I had to do it.”

“Why? why?” she stormed tearfully. “Are you demanding that I devote my life entirely to you—on these wretched monotonous voyages—divorced from my sex and all that a woman desires? And when a fine clean, upright man pays me attention and brings some pleasure into my humdrum existence, you brutally drive him away.”

“But, my dear child,” remonstrated the father, “I have only your best interests at heart. That fellow was not the kind of man I’d want to see you marry. You know nothing about him—”

“I know that he was kind, brave and a gentleman,” interrupted Dorothy unconvinced, the tears streaming from her blue eyes. “He told me all about his family and his past life and I believe in him.”

“Some queer birds fly to sea,” observed the skipper sagely. “I didn’t like his looks. He was too good-looking and his manners were too nice and high-falutin’.”

Dorothy sniffed disdainfully. “Commend me to a Nova Scotian sea captain for odd notions and suspicions,” she exclaimed. “They never seem to get out of their village ways and country outlook—no matter how much of the world they’ve seen. Because Mr. Crosby was handsome and polite and unlike the uncouth, homely and whiskery images you usually have as officers you immediately think there’s something wrong with him. Oh, I wish I were a man. . . . I could assert myself then.”

The father eyed her quizzically. "By Godfrey, Dot, I sometimes wish you were," he said significantly. "I'd be better able to handle you then, but, you're a girl, and my girl, and I wouldn't change you." He leaned forward and clasped her hands in his brown fists. "My dear," he continued, looking up into her red-rimmed eyes, his hard features softened. "I hate to hurt you, girlie, but tell me honest—did you really love that man? Honest now?"

"Ye-s-s!" The answer came half-hesitant.

"And were you prepared to marry him—go away and live with him—and leave your old father alone? Were you, Dorothy?"

She looked confused. "We-e-ll . . . I hadn't given that matter much thought."

"I don't think you did, Dot," said the father calmly. "I think you were just swept off your feet by Crosby and you didn't think of the future. I saw what was happening and I sent him away before it went too far."

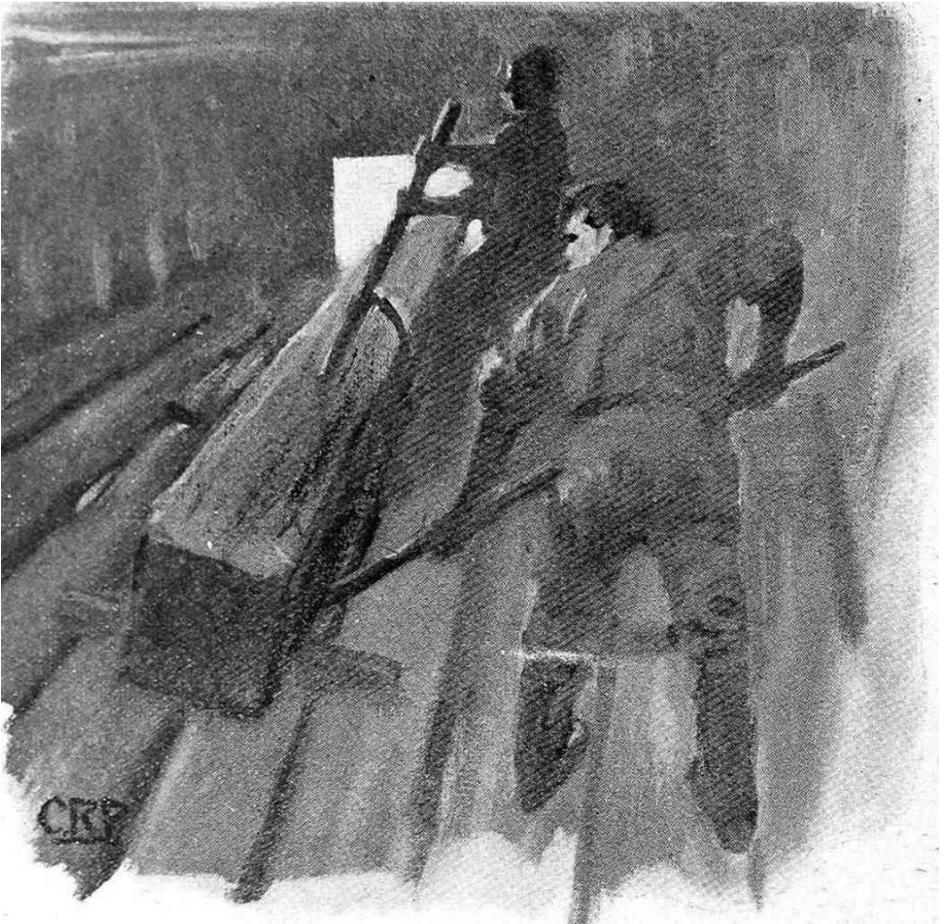
"You've done that with every man that's paid any sort of attention to me," returned Dorothy, stubbornly. "There was poor Tom Morris at home. You dragged me down to Buenos Ayres to get me away from him. There was Jack Ainslie—that fine second mate who never breathed a word of love to me—you turned him adrift just as you dismissed Mr. Crosby. A convent life couldn't be stricter than mine. I shall write to Aunt Etts to-night and go and stay with her."

The captain patted her hands soothingly. "Don't do anything like that, Dorothy," he said. "Maybe I've seemed a mite severe, but I've had to be both father and mother to you. I love you better than anything else in this wide, wide world, Dorothy dear, and when you marry, your husband will have to be a real man worthy of your respect and mine—for I won't let you go else."

"And what would Mr. Crosby have to do to gain your approval?" She asked the question hopefully.

Captain Munro thought for a space, then his answer came crisp and decisive. "When he has commanded a ship for two years and can show me a couple of thousand dollars of his own money and introduce me to his relatives, then, by gorry, he can come and talk turkey. But not before, and that's flat."

In the course of time, the *Wanderer* discharged her salt ballast and was then rowed over to the timber coves. Here, under the shadow of the Canadian Gibraltar, the rafts of square timber were floated alongside the ship and stowed into her holds through bow and stern ports. It was hard and laborious work, calling for skill and strength on the part of the timber stowers, and O'Brien, though boss of his outfit, toiled with his gang.



And when a hand was required below decks, he would be down in the semi-darkness of the hold, wrestling with the great slimy timbers.

The stevedores worked “double tides.” He was on the water poling timbers before day-break and long before his men reported for work; at other times he was on the fo’c’s’le-head at the timber tackles and Dot would hear his bull-like voice bawling: “Top up, starboard! Easy, port!” or some such command. And when a hand was required below decks, he would be

down in the semi-darkness of the hold, wrestling with the great slimy timbers—prying and cant-hooking them into their appointed places. It was dangerous work, as Dorothy well knew, for she had seen one man hoisted up with both legs smashed between colliding butt-ends of ponderous timbers and the sight sickened her so that she evinced real concern for her Irish friend when he went below. And down there she had watched him toiling—a red-shirted troglodyte in the gloom of the hold, red-faced and perspiring, hairy chest and arms exposed and the great muscles bulging under his skin as he swung, turned over, and securely stowed a huge length of twenty-inch timber charging violently in through the ports.

Thus the man labored until mid-afternoon when he would don his coat and seek her with—“It’s a fine day for a little drive around, Miss, and if you don’t mind, I’ll be after hitching up the horse and calling for you.”

There were times when the thoughts of Crosby were uppermost that she would have preferred to be alone, but the Irishman’s engaging manner, his school-boyish boldness and his eagerness to proffer hospitality, caused her to accept the invitations and to submerge her feelings for the time being. Though she felt that her dream of love with the mate was over, yet nightly she prayed that she might see him again and that Fate would pave the way to grant her desires. But since he left the *Wanderer*, Crosby had never communicated with her in any manner.

Oddly enough, to her excursions with the stevedore, Captain Munro raised no objections. “A fine up-standing man,” her father replied to her quizzing one day. “You’ll come to no harm with him. An able man, by gorry!”

Dorothy sniffed. “Yes, indeed, a fine man, and in your good graces because he’s loading the ship cheaper than any other stevedore in Quebec. A fine fool would be more fitting.”

The skipper’s eyes seemed to snap. “By the Great Hook Block, Dorothy, the poor devil that gets you will mate up with a rough tongue. I’m doing a great service to my fellowmen when I chase them away from you.”

The ship had been loading at Wolfe’s Cove for almost two weeks when Dorothy suddenly ran into Crosby. She had gone ashore unescorted to mail a letter to a girl friend and, in turning a corner, she came upon him.

“Dorothy!” He was the first to speak. “I thought my chance would come,” he said, his dark eyes expressing the pleasure he felt. “I’ve waited

around here many times hoping Fate would bring your steps this way.” He clasped her hands. “This is a happy meeting, Dot.”

For a moment or two she seemed bereft of speech, then regaining some measure of control, she stammered: “I—I was wondering what had become of you.” She eyed him keenly—allowing her gaze to wander over his handsome features. He had new clothes on and appeared prosperous.

They walked to the post-box together he talking volubly, she oddly silent. “Tell me, Dorothy,” he said, “is O’Brien still paying attention to you?”

“He has been taking me around the city a few times,” she replied.

He paused and seemed to hesitate before speaking again. Then halting his steps, he turned towards her and said: “I dislike interfering with your affairs. Dorothy, but I wish you wouldn’t go around with that man.”

“Why, Victor?” Her eyes were wide in surprise.

“He’s a waster, Dot, a dissolute brute, a man of low character and morals and unworthy of your society.”

“How can you say that? What do you know about him?” There was a hint of resentment mingled with anxiety in her tone.

“I know a lot about him, Dot.”

She drew her hands away from his and repeated the question with insistence. “What do you know about him?”

He stared out over the river as if in an effort to recall the past and when he spoke his words were measured and solemn.

“It was five years ago, Dorothy, and we were together in a small barque called the *Rienzi*. He was skipper and I was mate and we were standing watch and watch together. It was my first voyage with him and my first as mate. I knew nothing about the man when I joined the ship, but I wasn’t long aboard before I found out that he drank heavily. We put out to sea and I never put in such a tough time in all my life. When he wasn’t below drinking, he was on deck abusing the crew and carrying sail if it were blowing. It was a winter passage and blowing most of the time. She was a little vessel and deeply loaded—too deep for a winter passage, and I had a session, standing his watch when he was drunk and incapable, and expecting him to capsize her or rip the spars out when he came on deck.”

To make a long story short, Dorothy, we made the entrance to the Baltic in thick weather. O'Brien came up on deck that night, mad drunk, and began cracking on sail. During his watch, the *Rienzi* ran down a Danish fishing boat. He got panicky at this and instead of standing by and saving the poor fellows, he ordered the man at the wheel to stand on, and that in spite of the cries for help which came from the sinking craft. Four men were drowned." He paused. Dorothy shuddered and there was horror reflected in her eyes.

"When we made port," continued Crosby, "he altered the log-book and did not report the affair. He also tried to buy the silence of myself and the man at the wheel. He even threatened to kill me if I said anything. But I did, and O'Brien skipped out. Had he not done so, the Danes would have killed him. The British Consul recommended the cancellation of O'Brien's certificate as master and he branded him publicly as a coward and a disgrace to the Merchant Service and its honorable traditions. That's the story of O'Brien—the man who has been entertaining you around Quebec."

The matter-of-fact rendition seemed to paralyze Dot for a full minute and she was incapable of utterance. The fresh color died in her cheeks and the expression on her face showed plainly that she had visioned and realized the enormity of the Irishman's crime against seafaring chivalry. "He stood on—and four were drowned!" She repeated the words in a whisper. Crosby nodded. The narration seemed to have affected him, for his handsome features were grave and his dark eyes seemed misty.

"I must get back to the ship," said Dorothy suddenly. "I must get back. I've been gone over-long."

He grasped her hands and held her. "Just a moment, Dot. I've something to tell you—"

"Yes?"

"I've been lucky. I've got command of a handsome little barque and I sail to-morrow—"

Her eyes lighted up with pleasure. "For England?" she interrupted, eagerly. "We go Liverpool, you know."

"Well, no," he replied with some hesitation, "I'm for the Mediterranean, unfortunately."

Dismay was revealed in her face at the answer. “The Mediterranean?” she echoed. “Then we shall not see each other again, until, perhaps—” She paused.

“Perhaps what?” His eyes searched hers expectantly.

“Until you have been in command two years, and can show savings of two thousand dollars, and make father acquainted with your family.”

He flashed her an odd glance, “Who said that?” he questioned sharply.

“My father.”

He seemed relieved and a smile crossed his features. Then he became serious again. “I can easily do that, Dorothy, but two years is an age.” He drew her suddenly towards him. “Why wait, darling?” he said quickly and in a voice vibrant with emotion. “Why wait a long and weary two years? I’m in command of a ship now.”

She stared at him curiously. “What do you mean?”

“Why not sail with me now, loved one? Run away with me to-night. We can be married, perhaps, before we sail, or at the first opportunity. What do you say?”

“And leave my father, unknowing?” she exclaimed in pained surprise. “No, no, no! I wouldn’t think of it!” she added decisively.

“We can go back to him, Dorothy, darling, after we are married,” he said appraisingly. “Don’t cast my plan aside without a thought, dear. It is the only—I can’t exist without you—”

“No, no, no!” She shook her head. “I wouldn’t do it. You must wait and work and then ask my father.”

“That’s hopeless,” the man cried despairfully—the keenness of a great disappointment showing in his features. Then he seemed overcome with a gust of passion. Grasping her arms with fingers that made her wince, he ground out passionately: “God’s truth! I’ll make you come! you can’t play with me that way. You throw a hitch around me with those eyes of yours and the ways of you and make me your slave and then turn me adrift with a vague promise . . . two years . . . because you won’t leave your father? To hell with your father!”

The girl broke from his grasp and drew back—astonishment and fear pictured on her white face. Crosby caught her again and the passion

died out in his eyes and he was calm. "I'm sorry, Dorothy mine," he said tenderly, "but I love you so. I've been almost mad since I left you walking the streets . . . lying awake nights . . . with the vision of you branded on my soul, your voice ringing in my ears, and thinking, thinking, thinking . . . and all to no end, naught but the dark and eternity ahead. A poor, homeless devil of a wandering sailor . . . Forgive me, darling!" His fine features were pallid under the tanned skin and his eyes reflected the agony in his heart. Her woman's sympathy went out to him and she laid a caressing hand on his arm.

"Poor Victor . . . poor Victor," she murmured, choking. "It breaks my heart, but I cannot do otherwise. After all, two years will soon pass."

In the dusk, he caught her to his breast and held her tightly for a full minute. Then he released her. "Good-bye, dear one . . . good-bye."

"Good-bye Victor! Good luck and God go with you!" Not daring to remain longer, she turned and made down the street with hurried steps, her heart throbbing, her eyes misty, while the man stood and watched her until she turned the corner.

In a daze, she picked her way out on the narrow plank walk connecting the shore with the crib-work at which the ship was lying, and entering the cabin, immediately rushed to her room. Locking the door she threw herself down on the settee and gave full rein to grief.

Next morning early, the Irishman sought her at the poop-break and not seeing her there, he came down into the cabin. "Ask Miss Munro if she'll be kind enough to see me for a minnit?" he said to the steward. The man knocked at her door and repeated the message.

"Tell that man that I have no desire to see him again!" came the answer in a tone that was distinct and decisive. The stevedore heard, and when the steward came back and was about to convey her reply, the blood was in his face and neck; he interrupted bluntly: "Alright, steward, ye don't need to say any more." And almost bluntly, he stumbled out of the cabin, muttering: "The *Rienzi*, the *Rienz*—she's h'ard the story!"

From the minute O'Brien first set eyes on Dorothy Munro in the *Wanderer's* cabin, he told himself that here was a woman he desired for his own. In his passions, he was a true Celt and ready to die for an ideal. He would not realize that many obstacles were likely to bar his path, nor would he take the trouble to find out if the girl of his heart was fancy free. He had

fallen in love with Dorothy at first sight, and with all of an Irishman's impetuosity, he set both mind and body to the task of winning her. A setback to such a man was sufficient to fan his passion into a hot flame.

Leaving the ship, he made for home. Sitting by his bedroom window, he smoked successive pipe-fulls of tobacco until the ardor of his puffing burned his tongue and he threw the pipe away. Refusing his meals, he remained in seclusion, thinking, and instead of regaining complacency as the hours passed, he worked himself into a hot fury. "Crosby told her—the swab!" he muttered fiercely. "She'd never have spoke thataways for anything else."

By nightfall, all-day communion with his chaotic thoughts stirred up the devil in his Irish temperament and with a biting curse, he jumped to his feet, grabbed his hat and coat, and started for the street. "I'll find the scum," he growled savagely, "and whin I do, I'll break the pretty face of him, by Judas!"

His mother met him in the hall and his anger cooled momentarily at the sight of her. "Where are ye going, Larry dear?" she asked anxiously.

"Down to the booms, mother mine. 'Tis blowing hard on the river and I want to make sure the timber don't get adrift." He spoke calmly, but the mother knew he lied. She placed her arms around him and looked up into his face. "Larry dear, what is the matter? Time there was when ye'd be after tellin' me all your troubles, but since your father died and ye came home from the seafarin', ye've been a strange lad."

He laughed oddly. "Ye've got quare notions, machree," he said. "Sure, an' we don't all kape young."

"But you're ragin' at something, Larry, and you ate no meal to-day. You're vexed in mind." She paused, holding him. "Is it the little Nova Scotia lass what's been vexin' ye?" she asked softly.

He shook his head, smiling the while. "Nothing like that, mother. Timber stowin' has lots of worries to kape a man from his food and out o' nights. Ye'll have to let me on my way, mother." He bent down and kissed her and swung out into the street.

Quebec in the seventies possessed a roaring Sailor Town. The great fleets of timber ships, hundreds of them, crowded the coves and booms and disgorged a great cosmopolitan crowd of seamen—water-farers, hard men in a hard trade, denizens of worn-out ships most of them, making their bitter northern passages with but the wind-mill pump and their timber cargoes

keeping the ships afloat. When timber-droghers hit the beach, they were obsessed with but three desires—board and lodging, drink, and women. Quebec was amply provided with all forms of entertainment.

O'Brien turned his steps into the sailor hang-outs of Lower Town. He made first for the Triton Inn—a favorite rendezvous for mates—in the hope that he might run across the trail of the man he sought. “Whin I get him, by the curse of Crummel, I’ll twist the neck off him, so I will! I’ll tache him to keep a hitch around his loose tongue.” And grinding his teeth in hate and fury, he strode fiercely down the narrow streets, elbowing passers-by out of his way until they turned and stared at him with curiosity and curseful resentment.

But his visit to the Triton Inn drew a blank—no one there had seen or heard of Crosby. To Paddy Malone’s and Ted Healy’s places he went, but their boarding-houses had never provided the *Wanderer*’s ex-mate with food and shelter. Then a French-Canadian timber swinger furnished a clue. “I think I see dat feller with Louis Lachapelle de oder day. Big, dam’ fine feller, *Anglais*, wit’ fine face—” O’Brien waited to hear no more but set out for Lachapelle’s office. This man was a ship-chandler and the Irishman found him poring over his accounts by the light of an old ship’s cabin lamp in the low beamed store that he owned near Champlain Street.

“*Bon soir, m’sieu,*” O’Brien greeted him and started in. “I’m looking for an English mate by the name of Crosby—Victor Crosby. He used to be mate on the Nova Scotiaman I’m loading—the *Wanderer*.”

Lachapelle pushed his spectacles upon his forehead and methodically laid his pen down on the desk ere replying. “*Oui, m’sieur,* I know de man. What you want heem for, hah?”

“I want to give him something, Mister,” answered the other, hopeful that he would finally locate his man.

“Hah!” The Frenchman grunted. “I geeve heem command of a sheep de oder day—a Greek sheep. De skeeper took seek. Meester Crosbee spik de Greek language and was well recommend to me so I put heem in charge for take de sheep to Europe—”

“The name of the vessel, Mister?” interrupted O’Brien hoarsely. “Quick the name of the vessel?”

“She ees a barque—a leetle barque,” replied the other, “and her name ees —” He broke off and began deliberately searching through a file of paper.

O'Brien writhed with impatience.

With painful exactitude, Lachapelle turned over a heap of store bills, reading out the master's names affixed to them, while the Irishman leaned over his shoulder. The keen eyes of the stevedore was the first to sight the signature "Victor Crosby, Master" on a sheet the other thumbed into view. "That's it," almost bawled O'Brien, triumphantly. "Let me see it, Mister!" Without waiting for it to be handed to him, he whisked it out from the pile on the desk and eagerly scanned the paper for the ship's name.

"Barque *Antonio Pereides* of Syra," he read. Handing it back to the ship chandler, he enquired hastily, anxiously. "Where's she lyin', Mister?"

Lachapelle cocked his head to one side and pondered. "I t'ink dat vessel's gone, *m'sieur*. De Capitan Crosby signed hees papers yesterday and was all ready to sail. Wit' dees hard sou'west win' she's gone for sure—a fine chance for get away down de reever." "Where was she lyin', Mister?" O'Brien was trembling now with excess of feelings in which rage and apprehension mixed.

"She load over at Duncan's boom at Levis—" Without waiting to hear more, O'Brien rushed out into the street again. "*Antonio Pereides*—a little barque—and Crosby's skipper. . . . By Godfrey! I'll hunt the river for him! Levis, he said . . . and whin I git me hands on him, I'll kill him, s'help me!"

For a moment, he debated his course of action. "My boat! I'll git me boat an' shoot over to Levis an' sarch the fleet. Maybe he ain't gone. Godfrey's curse! I pray he ain't gone, the bloody . . ." And he broke off with a string of deep-water oaths as he set out at a run to the place where his boat was tied.

It was moored inside of the boom where he was loading the *Wanderer* and after ten minutes running he reached the river bank and paused to regain his breath ere picking his way out among the logs. It was dark and blowing hard from the sou'west, and the wind had the *Wanderer* listed towards the crib and was whining in tremendous minstrelsy through the naked spars and rigging of the ship. A glimmer of light showed through the vessel's cabin ports and the stevedore stood staring at it and wondering what Dorothy was doing then.

His mad anger had settled down into a sullen determination to scour the river for Crosby. Two persons dominated his brain—Crosby and

Dorothy—the one a mad hate, the other a fiery love. He hated the Englishman because he had blackened him in the eyes of the girl—blackened him by poisoning her mind against him by revealing an episode in his past life. “Well, he’s nipping out and he thinks he’s spiked my chances, but I’ll have a look for him, by the powers, and we’ll see who’s the better man.”

He picked his way cautiously in the dark, butting into the rain and wind, towards the ship. His boat was tied almost under the *Wanderer’s* stern. “A hell of a night,” he growled, brushing the wet hair from over his eyes, “but the *Antonio Pereides*. . . . Crosby. . . . Levis.” He stumbled on a little further—the ship was close at hand by now. “It’s soaked to the skin ye are already,” he muttered to himself, “but a swing at the oars’ll warm ye up—”

He brought up suddenly at the sound of shouting from the cabin of the Nova Scotia ship. Then came a muffled report. “Now, what the dickens was that?” He listened, ears straining, nerves alert and eyes attempting to penetrate the blackness. Then came a series of shrieks—the screaming of a woman—readily distinguishable above the chattering of the water amongst the floating timber and the dull rushing sound of the wind in the *Wanderer’s* lofty spars. “*Mille tonerre!*” The Irishman was leaping over the obstructions on the crib-work and racing for the ship. In the space of seconds, he gained the cap-log of the rough wharf and made a wild spring for the *Wanderer’s* poop. Grasping the stanchions, he hurled himself over the rail and landed with both knees on the deck. Oblivious of the pain of his heavy fall, he jumped to his feet and ran to the after companionway.

Crashing down the steps, he ran along the passage into the main cabin and in the dim glow from the turned-down lamp saw the prone body of Captain Munro, face down, on the floor. “The’ divil!” ejaculated the Irishman at the sight. “What’s the game here?”

He wasted no time in getting to the Captain. Turning him over, a hasty examination revealed the fact that he was knocked senseless by a blow on the head. A derringer pistol was clutched in his hand. “Now, and what the divil does this mane? Is Crosby in this—?” He had scarce given birth to the thought when a man staggered into the cabin. It was the steward, dazed, blinking the lamp-light and with his scalp split and bleeding. “’E ’it me a perishin’ crack!” he whined.

“Who did? What’s happened? Where’s Miss Munro?” snapped the stevedore. “That mate what was wiv us—Crosby. Come aboard wiv a couple

of men an' took Miss Munro off wiv them. 'It me an' the Old Man a per—"

"Hell's Delight!" O'Brien lifted the shipmaster in his arms and carried him over to a settee where he laid him tenderly down. "Crosby, ye say? And kidnapped the skipper's daughter." He rapidly scrutinized the captain's face and the blow on his head. "He'll come to in a few minutes." A second examination of the heavily breathing shipmaster and O'Brien's hazy quest of Crosby now became a definite resolve, a hunt with a real purpose, but just such a hunt as a wild, hate-maddened Irishman would be expected to try under the circumstances. . "Here, you!" he bawled to the steward. "Look after the skipper. Bathe his head . . . cold water . . . a slug of rum . . . hump yerself!"

Oblivious of the pain in his knees, he jumped from the ship's rail down on to the crib and ran for his boat. Casting the painter off, he fell into the little craft, clattering and splashing in the rain water which half-filled it, and seizing an oar, he sculled out between the floating logs and gained the open water of the river.

The chill wind and the cold rain on his face served to lower the fever of his temper and he began to think calmly. Throwing the oar inboard, he cleared the tiny boat-sail, and stepping the mast, spread the small leg-o'-mutton to the wind. Snatching at sheet and swinging the oar into the sculling chock again, he steered the boat over towards the Levis shore. Hounded by the stiff breeze and in the grip of the out-running tide, the little craft, careening dangerously at times, leaped and plunged across the river and was coming up on the vessels anchored there almost before O'Brien realized it.

"Now what's to do?" he asked himself. "Blacker'n the Earl o' Hell's riding boots and a hunder' vessels on the Levis shore—'tis like pickin' out needles in a straw stack. A six hunder' tons looks as big as a thousand in this here rain and dark." He started the sheet a trifle and swung off down the shore.

A big full-rigged ship loomed up ahead and his keen eyes picked out the breaking water over a raft alongside of her. With a quick jerk at the steer oar and a slackening of the sheet, he swung the racing boat away from the danger with but a foot or two to spare. "Aha! Might have stove up on that," he muttered with a glance at the almost submerged timber. "Must kape me wits about me. River's full of this stuff and with this wind and tide there's liable to be a lot of timber loose and adrift. Heaven grant that I meet up with none of it this night."

Heedless of the cold and his sodden clothing, he drove the boat through the dark with the water in her half-way up to the thwarts and washing over his ankles. “Now,” he said aloud, “this Crosby must be underway and slidin’ for the Gulf. He ain’t goin’ to hang around with the chances of being nabbed by a tug or a police boat. With this fair wind and ebb tide, he’ll be slippin’ for sea as fast as his hooker will go—that’s certain, so don’t waste any more time huntin’ him among these packets to an anchor.”

He continued on for a space and then gave vent to an ejaculation. “Shure, now, but I’m the great fool,” muttered O’Brien. “How’re they goin’ to find out what hooker this Crosby is aboard of? Didn’t I just find it mesilf by a lucky fluke? And how’s Old Man Munro agoin’ to set the police on the trail whin he don’t know? And, you, Larry O’Brien, ye didn’t have sinse enough to tell that steward to have the *Antonio Pereides* stopped at the mouth of the Gulf by a gunboat.” He snorted. “Ah, well, maybe ye’ll niver catch him. Ye’ll thin have time to do your telegraphin’ for warships.”

The lights of Levis vanished in the gloom and he headed for the Isle of Orleans and the South Channel. It was rougher as the river opened out and the weather called for a cool head and a steady hand on the steering oar. Several times the boat escaped destruction by the stevedore’s eyesight and hair-breadth shaving of drifting timber. To any but an expert riverman, the trip in the dark would have been a nightmarish journey—a perilous adventure.

As time passed, O’Brien began to feel the chill of the wet clothing on his body and his knees pained him severely. Physical discomfort began to excite reason and he wondered where he was driving to and what he was going to do if his quest was successful.

“You’re a fool,” said Reason, “a crazy, impetuous fool chasing a shadow. If you catch up with Crosby’s vessel, what will you do?”

“Keep on, Larry me lad, keep on,” advised the Celtic impulse which knows neither rhyme nor reason, “you may catch him, and if you do, let things shape themselves according to opportunity.”

“Who are you after?” questioned Reason, puzzled.

“I’m after Crosby—no, Dorothy—no, Crosby. Hell! I’m after both, but I’m out to bring the girl back—”

“Perhaps she went voluntarily,” suggested Reason.

“I heard her scream,” asserted Impulse, “and, by gorry, whether she went free-will or not I’m for seeing her again and finding out who’s her fancy man.”

“If it should be Crosby?” hinted Reason.

“Thin I’ll kill him!” declared Impulse.

“Yis, be dad, if she chooses him, I’ll kill the swine, for he ain’t fit to have her. He’s rotten somewhere. But I h’ard her scream and that’s enough for me,” he cried aloud. “I’ll chase the son ov a dog to hell an’ gone!” A creature of Impulse, truly, with a mad hate and a mad love urging him on, supplying the fire of determination, and ready to risk all for a hazy purpose.

The lights of Grosse Isle were abeam when O’Brien looked at his watch. It was half-past two in the morning and he had been sailing for hours. He was chilled to the marrow and his knees were swollen and painful. Then Grosse Isle lights vanished in a squall of rain and he was forced to belay the sheet and bail the water out of the boat. This task kept him employed for about ten minutes. On resuming his look-out again, he saw the glimmer of a light close ahead. A burst of wind shot him up under the counter of a white-hulled vessel with a round stern. She was under canvas and bound out, and in the gloom, the Irishman’s straining eyes read the black-lettered name and hailing port—*Antonio Pereides*—Syra.

“’Tis him, by the powers o’ Blazes!” he ejaculated gleefully. The tide was on the turn and the deeper vessel was beginning to feel the resistance of the flood. The stevedore, in his light boat, drove upon the weather beam of the barque, and came alongside.

Without any plan of action, he unshipped the mast and clewed up the sail, grabbed the boat-painter and leaped into the barque’s lanyard, he tumbled over the rail on to a deck-load of spruce deals and ran aft. Strangely enough, not a soul seemed to notice his coming aboard.

Up on the short poop he strode boldly and made for the cabin entrance. There was a man steering at the wheel and someone, not Crosby by the build of him, was lounging over the lee rail on the other side of the house. In the dark, O’Brien’s presence was unnoticed. “No pilot, and a fine look-out they’re kapin’,” he murmured. Slipping quietly down the cabin ladder, he found himself in a dark alleyway aft of the main apartment. There was a light in the cabin and he could hear voices.

“. . . must go on deck, now, Dorothy, but I've done this because I couldn't exist without you." The Irishman recognized Crosby's voice. "Th' ruddy sweep," he muttered viciously.

"You had no right to do this." It was Dorothy speaking. "I hate you! You—you beast!" She was sobbing.

"Don't speak like that, sweetheart," said the other appealingly.

"Don't talk to me? Go away! I hate you! I could kill you!" And she burst into a frenzy of hysterical weeping.

"Now, by th' powers," muttered O'Brien, "I feel me timper risin'. I'm for wringin' that Crosby's neck right this very minnit." He gave his belt a hitch and buttoned his coat. Clenching his fists, he stepped out into the cabin.

The Irishman's soul was possessed by a wild fury and the blood was in his head when he entered the apartment. His roving glance centered on the two occupants to the exclusion of all else. He saw Dorothy crouched on a settee, her hair down over her shoulders, red-eyed and weeping, and but partially dressed, while Crosby was standing up facing him, consternation and amazement on his fine features.

"Hah! I've got ye now, Crosby!" Roaring the words, the stevedore advanced with a rush, arms outspread and fingers ready to grip the other's throat. Fear flashed into the Englishman's face for an instant as O'Brien leaped towards him, but he kept his wits and dodged to the other side of the cabin table as the Quebecker crashed against it in his mad drive. Lugging out a pistol from his pocket, Crosby cocked it and started shouting frantically in a foreign tongue. Heedless of the levelled weapon, O'Brien was preparing for a leap across the table when there came a scream from Dorothy. He hesitated for a moment and turned his eyes towards her, then something crashed down on his head and he remembered no more.

A short, thick-set, black-whiskered man appeared at Crosby's frantic shouting and swinging a heavy leather sea-boot had dropped the stevedore like a stunned ox. For almost a minute, both men stood still regarding the fallen Irishman, silent save for their excited breathing and Dorothy's frightened whimpering. Then Crosby laid the pistol down on the table and came around to where his adversary lay prone on the cabin floor.

"You came in time, Peter," he muttered, stooping down to examine the unconscious O'Brien. "The beggar would have had me in a few seconds if

you hadn't laid him out—" He broke off at a grunt from the black-whiskered man and looked up at him. Then he rose quickly erect and wheeled towards the girl.

"Just—just you—you st-stand still!" she was stammering. While the two men were looking the stevedore over, she had slipped across and picked up the pistol from the table and was pointing the muzzle, somewhat waveringly, in their direction.

The Englishman smilingly stepped towards her, cool and unafraid. "Let me take that, Dot," he said calmly.

"I'll shoot—I'll shoot!" almost screamed the other. The man stepped before the menacing muzzle, there was a click as Dorothy pulled the trigger, and Crosby's hand darted out and closed over hers. "There's nothing in it, Dorothy," he said, with a short laugh. "Let me take it . . . and you would have shot me," he added, in hurt surprise, gently disengaging the weapon from her fingers.

She glared at him. "Yes, I would have shot you! I'm—I'm sorry it wasn't loaded." She drew away from him, defiant.

"What will I do with this feller?" the other man broke in, pushing the body of the Irishman with his foot. "Better drop him over the side—"

"You dare do that!" the girl advanced and thrust herself between the two men, her eyes blazing. "Murderers!" she continued scornfully. "You'd kill him, would you?"

"We wouldn't kill him, Dot," said Crosby soothingly. "If my mate hadn't knocked him out, he'd probably have killed me. What else could we do? Be reasonable, dear."

The girl dropped down on her knees beside O'Brien and parted the hair away from an ugly bleeding wound on the head. "Bring me some water and clean rag," she commanded of Crosby. Almost humbly, he went and fetched them.

When she had dressed the wound and swathed the Irishman's head in a bandage, Crosby spoke, "I'll look after him now, Dot. I'll place him in a bunk and make him comfortable. You'd better go to the room I've prepared for you, and you may lock the door. The key is inside." He smiled oddly as she favored him with a glance of withering contempt. "Good-night,

sweetheart,” he added as she proceeded to leave his presence. “Pleasant dreams!” And he bowed low.

When the click of a turning key betokened that she had entered the berth, Crosby stepped over to the lee alleyway and opened the door of the mate’s room. The man was sitting inside waiting. “Get me a pair of bracelets and leg-irons,” he said. “We can’t have this joker loose when he comes to. We’ll place him in a bunk in the second mate’s room—”

“Why don’t you heave him over the side?” growled the other. “Plenty trouble he’ll make for us.” The fellow spoke with a strong foreign accent. “Say,” he added as an afterthought. “Why don’t you make away with him? Some of these days that *Rienzi* business—”

“Shut up about the *Rienzi*,” interrupted the Englishman brusquely. “I won’t do away with him. He’s a friend of the young lady and I don’t wish to cause her any more pain. Rout out these irons—first thing we know he’ll come to and raise a rumpus.”

The mate grumbled and proceeded to hunt out the irons from amongst a miscellaneous collection of junk in a locker. “You’re courting trouble,” he growled surlily.

Crosby laughed. “We’ve not only courted it, Peter, but we’ve got it coming after us hot-foot.”

“I mean that we’re in for it. All Quebec knows about this kidnapping business by now. When I saw that man come into the cabin, I knew that the gaff was blown—”

“And what’s likely to happen?” enquired the mate apprehensively.

“Anything’s likely to happen. We’re still in the river and a tug full of police could overhaul us. They can use the telegraph and have the barque stopped by a man-o-war in the Gulf.” He paused. “I think you killed that steward when you hit him,” he added, significantly.

“I didn’t hit him hard enough for that,” retorted the other indignantly.

“He wasn’t breathing when I last saw him,” said Crosby. “He must have had a paper skull. Some men have.”

Peter desisted from his rummage in the locker and his face turned fearful. “You’re making the joke now—?”

“I was never more serious in my life,” said Crosby calmly. “You hit him pretty hard. He dropped like a log.”

The mate was visibly concerned. “Do you think that he might have died?” he asked the question stutteringly.

Crosby made a doubtful gesture. “Can’t say for sure, but when I left the cabin I gave him a squint and he looked a goner to me. But get these irons out first. We’ll talk this other business over afterwards.”

The manacles were fetched out and snapped on O’Brien’s wrists and ankles and the two men carried him and placed him into a lower bunk in the second mate’s room. “He’s safe for now.” said Crosby briefly. He closed the door and locked it from the outside.

“Now, Peter, there’s work to do to-night,” he continued. “Turn the hands out and give her all the sail she’s got. Then get some paint and blot out the ship’s name. You’d better give her topsides a coat of black paint—”

“But it’s wet and dark,” protested the other.

“You’ll find it both wet and dark when you come to the River Styx after your neck has been stretched in a Quebec jail-yard,” observed Crosby grimly. “Get sail and paint on her, Peter. Soon as daylight comes there’ll be a thousand eyes looking for a white-painted barque by the name of *Antonio Perides*—the master of which is wanted for the murder of a ship’s steward in Quebec.”

O’Brien came to his senses shortly after he was placed in the bunk. He felt wretchedly ill: every bone and muscle in his body seemed to be aching: his head throbbed with pain, and the least movement of his knees became an excruciating agony. He was a long time regaining his comprehension of affairs but when he felt the irons on his wrists and ankles he knew that Crosby had won the first move in the game. “Wonder he didn’t heave me overboard,” he muttered. “Well . . . s’long’s I’m living, the worse for him. But in the future, I won’t let me timper overcome me good sinse. I’ve been a fool—a blunderin’ blind fool jammin’ me head into the lion’s jaws.”

In an hour or so, his brain cleared and he began to think coherently. He wondered how Dorothy Munro was faring and the thought seemed to catch him at the throat. One thing was certain of and that was that she had not run away voluntarily. He recalled her words to the handsome

Englishman—"I hate you! I could kill you!" and the recollection gave him an odd sensation of pleasure. "A pair of wild-cats ye have aboard, Crosby, me lad," he murmured, "and though I'm coopered up and have me claws drawn, yet me brains aren't dead by any manner o' means. I'll be afther settin' thim to do more work than they did whin I was chasin' afther ye."

Six bells struck and Crosby paid him a visit. He gave O'Brien a keen scrutiny. "I'm glad to see that you're alright," he said with a pleasant smile, "but you're a very foolish man."

The other gave a contemptuous snort. "There are bigger fools aboard this hooker," he replied sullenly. "You've got yourself into a fine mess, Crosby."

"Indeed?" Crosby sat down on a camp-stool and nonchalantly blew a cloud of smoke from his pipe.

"Yis, indeed," continued the other. "Ye can't get clear of anny divil's trick like this, Mister Man. Clubbing Old Man Munro and forcibly abducting his daughter is a serious crime, and 'twas unfortunite for you that me and the waterfront policeman should have been down by the wharf at the time ye staged yer little show."

"Ah," Crosby's face became perceptibly graver but he smoked calmly on.

"Ye should have thought a bit afore you tried this play, Crosby," continued the Irishman. "The Gulf of St. Lawrence ain't the open ocean. There's only three holes for yez to get out—the Straits of Belle Isle, the Cabot Straits and the Gut of Canso. Ye won't try Canso, that's sure: Belle Isle will have the cruiser *Hyacinth* awatchin' for yez, and the gunboat *Tulip* will pick yez up in Cabot Straits. You're jammed in a clinch, Mister Man, and your capture is only a matter of days. For killing Cap'en Munro—you'll hang." To himself, O'Brien thought—"That's something to kape ye worrying over."

Crosby started. "Killing Captain Munro?" he repeated in surprise. "What d'ye mean? I only gave him a light tap with a belaying pin—"

"A hefty tap, Mister," returned O'Brien, watching the other keenly. "You stove the back of his skull in. He passed away in my arms—"

"That's a damned lie, O'Brien!" ejaculated Crosby, rising to his feet. "I'll—"

"Alright, alright, don't fly into a timper, me bold bucko," said the stevedore irritatingly. "Ye don't have to believe me, but ye can't help

believin' that there's telegraphs and warships and that ye're not out the Gulf yet. I give yez not more than two days liberty."

The big Englishman favored him with a sneering smile. "You must think I'm simple—"

"I do," interjected the Irishman with a snigger. "Good looks and good sinse don't travel in company wid a man."

The other affected not to notice the interruption. "—to swallow a yarn like that. Huh!" He gave a short laugh. "I'll send your breakfast in, Irish. Breakfast in bed, eh? How's that for hospitality? Sorry I can't take the ornaments off your wrists." He made no further remark but abruptly left the room.

The stevedore followed him with his eyes and then grinned silently. "You're trying to pass it off wid a bold face," he said to himself, "but I'll bet you're scared stiff. May I be forgiven for tellin' lies, but I'll have ye lookin' forty ways for Sunday, me bucko, afore I'm through wid you."

When Crosby went on deck, he immediately altered the barque's course and hauled her away from the south shore and more to the northward where traffic and habitation were scarce. The wind was blowing fresh and dead aft, and the little vessel, with yards square and all sail that could be set was storming down the wide and noble river at a ten knot clip. The mate, spurred by fear of what might have happened, had, by dint of bullying and physical persuasion, successfully turned the hands to work at painting the barque's topsides, and Crosby was busily engaged in lettering strips of canvas with the simple name "Lion." Two of the strips were nailed on both bows when completed, while another, with the hailing port "London" was tacked across the counter. To a casual observer, the white hulled *Antonio Pereides* of Syra, Greece, was masked in the black sided *Lion* of London, Britisher.

As painting operations in the dark had been rather patchy and too obvious, Crosby kept his crew busy during the morning obliterating the "holidays" or blank spots, while the mates worked overside also brushing in a wide yellow band along the sheer strake. The disguise would be very effective.

While all hands were thus engaged Miss Munro stole quietly out of her room and over to that in which O'Brien was confined. She tried the

door and finding it locked, tapped discreetly on the panels. "It's me—Miss Munro," she said softly. "Are you there, Mr. O'Brien?"

"I'm here, sure enough, Miss," came the answer. "And how be you this bright and summery morning?"

"Did you see my father?" came Dot's anxious query.

"I did, and he's alive and kicking, Miss, though for purposes of me own I'm making out that fri'nd Crosby killed him."

She seemed relieved. "What can we do, Mr. O'Brien?"

A muffled chuckle came from the interior of the room. "A whole lot, Miss," came the answer. "I'm trussed up and pretty useless physically, but I have a smooth tongue and some imagination. I'll have him cock-eyed wid me blarney afore many moons—see if I don't—and I'll have this ship in a torment fore and aft afore she's out of the Gulf."

"But what can I do?" the girl asked hurriedly.

"Jest kape fri'nely with him—" The steward was coming down the cabin companion. With a warning "Sh!" Dorothy stepped swiftly away from the door and entered her own berth.

"Ta-ra-ra! ta-ra-ra!" hummed the Irishman cheerfully when she had gone. But Dorothy was anything but cheerful, though, oddly enough, she entertained no great fear of Crosby. The man was madly in love with her she knew, and the knowledge seemed to inspire her with confidence in her ability to handle him. She had hopes of inducing the Englishman to land her somewhere or place her on board some inbound ship. O'Brien too would have to be released—she would demand that. In her own mind she pictured Crosby as being pliant enough to accede to her wishes if she insisted—she could not, and would not, give him credit for being so ruthless and determined as to carry out his mad scheme. Victor Crosby was a gentleman.

In the course of the morning, the second mate, a Frenchman, unlocked the door and came into the room and prepared to turn into the upper bunk above where O'Brien lay. He favored the captive with a friendly grin. "De skipper he's catch his girl alright, *m'sieu*. You no have de luck—"

The Irishman glanced at him through narrowed lids. "Yes, he's got the young lady alright," he answered in French, "but to kill the papa—ah, *Mon Dieu*, but that's the *mauvaise affaire!*"

The other's eyes opened wide in astonishment. "Kill the papa?" he ejaculated in his native tongue. "Who did?"

"Why, your *capitaine*. Killed the papa and stole the daughter—a bad business, *mon ami*." The Irishman looked grave.

"*Sapristi!* I did not know that. And you, *m'sieu*, are you not the young woman's fiance who came in pursuit? Our *capitaine* said she was being forced to marry you—"

O'Brien's eyebrows went up. Crosby was evidently an adept in prevarication also. "*Non, non, mon ami*," he replied positively. "Your *capitaine* is a liar. The young lady is nothing to me. I am a police officer. I came to arrest your *capitaine* for murder."

The Frenchman paused in the act of disrobing and stood regarding the manacled Irishman in open-mouthed surprise. The latter continued, speaking French. "Your *capitaine* is a criminal—a bad man. He is wanted for many crimes." He stopped and asked suddenly. "Were you with the *capitaine* when he killed the young lady's papa?"

The other shook his head violently. "*Non, non!* The mate and two men, Greeks, went with him. I stand by the ship and get the anchor up ready to sail."

"I'm glad of that for your sake, *m'sieu*," said O'Brien, "for you look like an honest man. You won't be jailed when the warships catch this barque at the Straits. I'll remember you."

"Warships?" The simple Frenchman seemed bewildered.

"But yes," explained the Irishman. "We telegraphed for the warships to stop this vessel down in the Gulf. That's why your *capitaine* is painting the ship."

As the second mate divested himself of his clothing preparatory to turning into his bunk, the stevedore's glib tongue and fertile imagination fashioned a rare story. So impressed was the officer that he sat on the settee listening and asking questions until O'Brien felt that inspiration was flagging and that it was time to call a halt ere he overreached himself. "Go and sleep now," he said, "and treat me as an enemy when your *capitaine* is around. But, when the warships overhaul you, I will look after you. In Quebec, you know, *mon ami*, the laws are severe, and they hang those who assist murderers to escape."

Slowly, the dull witted Frenchman clambered into his berth and for a long time afterwards O'Brien could hear him tossing and turning. The stevedore lay on his back laughing silently.

An hour later, Crosby came down and looked in upon him. "Sorry to have to keep you ironed, O'Brien," he said loudly, "but you're too dangerous to have loose aboard here. But, I'll put you ashore somewhere—"

The Quebecker gave an irritating snigger. "Your confidence is amazing, me man," he observed, "but ye'll never get clear of the Gulf no matter how much ye paint and disguise the hooker. There's gunboats waiting for yez down the Gulf and every steamboat out of Quebec and Montreal will be kapin' an eye skinned for yez. Crackin' her old man's skull is what cooked your goose, old cock. Ye misjudge yer own stringth—"

The handsome Englishman looked anxious and a shadow seemed to cross his face. "Oh, that be damned for a yarn, Irish," he growled. "You can't stuff or scare me with that story—"

"He died in me arms," declared the other seriously and fixing Crosby with a clear, unflinching gaze.

"Look here, you blackguard," snapped Crosby with a show of temper, "if I hear any more of that from you, so help me, I'll heave you over the side. Now, that'll do!"

"Why don't ye cast me loose?" jibed the stevedore, but Crosby slammed the door shut and went on deck.

Scarce had he gone when O'Brien had another visitor in the person of the smate, Peter. "Shure and the great Du Barry is afther holding a bedroom audience," observed the Irishman when the man came in. Something familiar in the black-whiskered visage seemed to awaken a cell in the stevedore's memory, but it was a fleeting thought and it passed unretained. "And what can I do for you, me fr'nd?"

"Tell me, Mister," the other enquired somewhat anxiously. "Was the steward dead when you left the Bluenose ship?"

"The steward?" O'Brien did some quick thinking. "Who told you that? Why do you ask?"

The black-whiskered man hesitated before replying. "The *capitaine* say the steward dead."

The stevedore had his line of action figured out. "Ah, the captain told you that to frighten you," he replied. "The steward is alright, Mister, but your captain is the murderer. He killed the young lady's father. The warships are going to stop this barque at the mouth of the Gulf. Your captain will hang."

Peter made a queer grimace at the information but seemed relieved.

The other continued. "I suppose you know that you can be hung too for assisting a murderer to escape?"

"No, I not believe that," came the half-doubtful answer.

The captive assumed a grave expression. "Let me tell you about the skipper of the *Good Hope*. He shot a man in a saloon in Quebec last year and skipped away aboard his ship. A gunboat overhauled him off Gaspé and brought him and his crew back. The captain and his two mates—they knew about their skipper's crime—were all tried and hung. The crew each got twelve months' imprisonment." He paused to watch the effect of the cold-blooded lie and added: "The British North American laws are very severe, and the Gulf is full of gunboats."

The mate curled his huge mustaches. "I think you tell one big dam' lie, Mister," he said calmly.

O'Brien's face took on a pained expression; for a moment the elusive thought of a minute before plucked at the gates of recollection. "This black-mugged dago sticks in me mind somewhere," he mused. "Where have I seen him before?" Failing to cajole the time and place from the mists of memory, he gave the man a cold stare and said brusquely: "Go away. I don't want to talk to you anny more."

"Yes, Mister, one big dam' lie!" The mate gave vent to a short laugh and went out.

"You're a tough nut," muttered the Irishman when he had gone, "but I'll bet I've got you thinking. What a fine thing it is that most of the men that use the sea are half-witted . . . and mainly spineless," he added.

The steward, a young Greek, brought him his dinner—placing it on a camp-stool alongside the bunk. The barque, running with square yards, was as steady as a house and O'Brien contrived to eat without much trouble in spite of his manacled wrists. As he consumed the meal, he could hear voices in the cabin. Miss Munro and Crosby were dining together and conversing

amicably. Dorothy was carrying out orders. When the Greek came to take away O'Brien's tray, the stevedore engaged him in conversation. The man could speak and understand English. "Do you know that your captain killed the young lady's father last night? I'm a police officer . . ." Within ten minutes, the young Greek went back to his pantry with his head buzzing and full of portentous information. "That'll fix things up for'ard," mused the Irishman. "That steward'll bust if he don't get for'ard and spill his yarn to the hands, and it won't lose anything in the telling. Crosby is more of a fool than I thought he was. He should have gagged me." He grinned and turned over on his side. "I'll have a bit snooze now while me lies sink in."

The Irishman awoke to find Victor Crosby standing in the room. "You here again?" growled the stevedore. "Shure I thought I had the nightmare."

"Look here, O'Brien," said the other pleasantly. "I don't like to have you all ironed up and a prisoner. If you'll give me your word of honor to behave and not attempt to interfere with me and my plans. I'll release you and have you placed aboard another vessel or landed ashore. What d'ye say?"

The stevedore sniggered in a manner which aroused the Englishman's ire. "I say no!" he answered decisively. "I don't want to be released. I want to be discovered like this when the blue-jackets board the ship. If I can get loose, I'll be afther killing yez for what ye've done and what ye've said about me around Quebec. And that's that." The door of the berth was open and O'Brien had an intuition that Miss Munro was within earshot.

Crosby appeared nonplused by the other's answer and when he spoke again his tones were petulant. "What did you want to horn in to my affairs for?" he questioned. "You know I love Miss Munro. All I have done was because of my love for her." His speech was louder than necessary and the quick-witted Celt noted the fact.

"I don't care to treat with murderers," almost bawled the captive. "I'm goin' to see yez hung if I don't kill yez mesilf. You killed her daddy and you expect her to love yez—"

The other man's eyes blazed. "I didn't kill him you lying swine!" he shouted in indignant temper. "Say that again, you hoosier, and I'll choke you where you sprawl—"

"Alright, alright, don't lose yer timper!" said O'Brien coolly. "But it's a bad business all the same—a bad business. And to think that that nice girl

should ever have taken up with the likes of you.”

“That sounds well coming from the former master of the *Rienzi*,” maliciously observed the other. “A man of your reputation is well fitted to judge—”

“Yes,” said the Irishman deliberately, and he favored the Antonio’s captain with a contemptuous stare. “I can judge men. You’ve got a fine appearance, Mister, and fine ways with yez, but there’s a snarl in yer brain and you’re rotten inside somewheres. There’s a dirty streak in ye. Ye’re not a whole man.”

“You—you—” Crosby stuttered and raised his great fist.

“That’s right! Hit me and show yer dirty streak!” shouted O’Brien, glaring defiantly at him. “Go on! Give me a hammerin’ while I’m tied hand and foot! Beat the devil out of me! I dare ye—”

Crosby gritted his teeth in an effort to restrain his temper and the other continued taunting him in a voice that resounded all over the ship. “You’re afraid, you waster! Hit me—”

“Stow your jaw, you bawling brute!”

“You murdered Cap’en Munro and ran off wid his daughter!” roared O’Brien, “and the warships and police are hunting ye. Ye’ll be afther getting yer poor sailors in trouble for helping ye escape the law. Murderer—” Smack! The Englishman’s fist caught O’Brien on the mouth. The stevedore’s eyes blazed and he writhed and struggled at his irons. With blood streaming from his lips, he continued his taunting shouts: “Murderer! Hit me again! I can’t strike back! Go on, hit me again! Why don’t ye kill me like ye killed Old Man Munro—”

There was a patter of feet outside and Dorothy stood in the doorway, her face white with fear and anger. “What are you doing to that poor man?” she almost screamed. “You coward—you brute! Striking him while he is defenseless—”

Crosby, red-faced and panting with rage, his fine nostrils dilating and his dark eyes alight with fury, regained control of himself by an effort. “I’ll put you ashore on Anticosti, O’Brien.” Turning to Dorothy, he commanded: “Go to your room, please!”

“I won’t!” She stamped her foot determinedly.

“Go to your room, I said!” He advanced towards her.

“Do as he says, Miss Munro,” interposed the Irishman, “or he’ll be afther murdering you like he did yer poor daddy.” And behind Crosby’s back, he gave an expressive wink. The girl caught the signal, paused irresolute, and with a well-simulated look of horror, shrunk from the angry Englishman and ran to her room.

“I’ll chuck you on the beach at Anticosti to-morrow, Mister,” said Crosby to his captive. And he too retired.

O’Brien rubbed his swollen mouth with his manacled hands. “Thank the Lord I’ve got good teeth,” he muttered. “Gorry, but I got him stirred up that time. All hands heard me roarin’. Fine! Fine.”

For the rest of the afternoon he was undisturbed. The steward brought him some supper and as he placed it upon the camp-stool, he whispered: “Is it true dat de warships look for us in de Gulf?”

“Sure thing, me lad,” answered the captive. “You’ll be in irons wid a blue-jacket standin’ over yez wid a bayonet inside forty-eight hours. All hands is in trouble for helpin’ yer skipper escape the law.” The steward looked grave but said no more, as Crosby and the mate came into the room at this juncture.

“I’m going to place you in a safer spot, Irish,” said the former. “You’ll go down in the lazarette where you can shout and roar all you have a mind to. Out with him, Peter!”

The stevedore protested strenuously at the move. Seizing the bunk boards in his strong fingers, he clung tenaciously, bawling his taunts and threats, while the two men tugged and hauled him out of the berth.

“And you’ll swing too, Mister Mate,” he cried, “for helping this murderer escape the law. Don’t forget the warships at Cabot Straits and Belle Isle! You’re bottled up like rats in a trap! Ha, ha,—rats in a trap!” And yelling and struggling, he was dragged out through the cabin and unceremoniously tumbled down through the lazarette hatch on to a pile of old sails. Ere the hatch slammed on him, Crosby spoke, “I’m really sorry, O’Brien, to do this, but for safety’s sake, it must be done.”

In the black darkness of the store-room the stevedore grinned to himself. “I’m thinkin’, me bold lad, that you’re afther lockin’ the stable door whin the horse is gone. Gorry, now, but I wish I had a smoke.” He curled himself

comfortably on the canvas and went to sleep as calmly as though he hadn't a care in the world.

The second night on board the *Antonio Pereides* found Dorothy Munro in a chaotic state of mind. Here were two men seeking her favor—both evidently ready to risk anything for her sake. She still retained a deep regard for Victor Crosby and while she resented his high-handed tactics, yet in her woman's heart she thrilled somewhat at his boldness in abducting her. There was something medieval in it—an echo of knightly times—and as she pondered over all that had transpired since she had been carried off, there was nothing in any of the Englishman's actions that she could characterize as being despicable. He had behaved towards her with courtesy and consideration, and she had to admit that she was attracted to him. But to fall in with his plans and marry him . . . ? She hesitated to extend the thought, for there was O'Brien—an Irish dare-devil, impetuous, nimble-witted, courageous, and she knew, as madly infatuated with her as was the Englishman. She liked O'Brien, more so since his mad adventure in pursuing Crosby, and she appreciated all that he was enduring on her behalf, but her regard for him seemed to chill when the ugly story of the *Rienzi* came to mind. It was the bucket of water that quenched the flame—the ugly shadow that obscured the light.

The two men were rivals, but the Irishman had exhibited the more bitterness. The Englishman had treated him roughly, she admitted, but what else could he do? It was a difficult situation for Crosby to meet, but putting herself in his place, Dorothy believed he was justified in keeping O'Brien confined until he was able to place him ashore. But when the stevedore was landed, Dorothy would insist on being landed also, Crosby had not yet captured her heart.

A respectful tap came on her door and she answered with a questioning "Yes?"

"It's me, Dorothy, I want to speak to you."

She opened the door and Crosby stood in the entrance. "Will you be kind enough to step outside a minute?"

She entered the cabin and he pointed to a chair. "Please be seated, Dot," he said courteously. Without any preliminaries, he began. "You've heard O'Brien accusing me of killing your father. That is not so. When I—er—took you away that night your father shot at me with a pistol and I threw a wooden belying pin at him. He was only stunned. O'Brien is lying when he

says I killed him. He is trying to frighten me, but it won't work." He paused and searched her face with his eyes. It was impassive, but its calmness assured him that the girl was not inclined to believe the stevedore's accusation of murder. "Now, as to O'Brien," he continued. "I don't want to treat him roughly, but I wouldn't dare have him loose on the ship. I offered to release him—"

"You're afraid of him," interrupted Dorothy with a slight sneer. Crosby met her scornful glance with a steady clear-eyed gaze. "I *am* afraid of him, Dot," he admitted without hesitation. "The man has a murderous hatred for me and would kill me at the first opportunity. I *could* handle him, but it would be brutal and you would condemn me for it. I want to gain your love and respect—not lose it."

Her lips curled. "Do you think your behaviour so far is likely to win my regard?"

"When a man is in love, he will stick at nothing," replied the other. "I would risk anything to have you for my own." He stopped for a moment and then burst forth in impassioned appeal: "Why act this way, Dorothy? You know I love you madly. We can fix this business up alright and straighten matters out with your father. At Gibraltar, we can get married, if you'll agree. I'll send back a letter to your father by the first inbound ship advising him and asking his forgiveness—"

Dorothy parried the question. "What do you propose to do with Mr. O'Brien?" Crosby looked annoyed. "I'll land him on Anticosti by the lighthouse on West Point. He can easily get back to Quebec from there."

"Will you land me there too?" The girl watched his face keenly.

"No, Dot, I won't!" he answered decisively. "Should I do that, you'd be out of my life for ever. With the two of us wandering across the oceans of earth there is small chance of my seeing you again. I have you here now and I'm going to keep you until you consent to marry me. On the *Wanderer* you liked me—"

"I hate you now," she snapped, her eyes flashing, "and I'll never marry you!"

Crosby's handsome face reflected his admiration of her as she appeared then—a tempestuous little beauty. When in a contrary and rebellious mood, she seemed ten times more desirable to his mind. "I will try and bring the old affection back," he said simply. "As for O'Brien, I will put him ashore."

He rose to his feet, reached for her hand and drew it to his lips. But ere he could accomplish the caress, she hastily withdrew it and flounced back into her berth—slamming and locking the door.

In spite of her declarations, Dorothy knew now that her heart contradicted her tongue. Crosby was winning the game. “I—I guess I’ll go to Gibraltar,” she mentally decided, and with the faltering decision came a strange feeling of elation as though a great light had succeeded in dispelling the clouds of doubt. “Yes, I’ll go to Gibraltar!”

Dorothy Munro rose from the bed, arranged her hair, and threw a shawl over her shoulders. It was stuffy below decks and she decided to go out for a breath of fresh air. Quietly unlocking her door, she entered the dim-lit cabin and was about to go up the after companion to the poop. “No!” she decided. “I’m likely to meet him up there.” Women-like, she was in no hurry to announce capitulation. Instead, she turned and walked along the alley to the entrance leading out on the main deck. It was open, though partially blocked by the deck-load of spruce deals. In fine weather, the steward brought the food from the galley through this entrance—saving a round-about climb over the poop.

Leaning over the resinous spruce planks, she looked up at the black sails swinging across the starry dark. It was a fine night and the wind was blowing from astern—a whole sail breeze which sped the barque along as steady as a church. She heard the pacings of two men on the poop above her head. Forward, the watch were gossiping around the fore-hatch and the cook was yarning in the galley with the steward.

Absorbed in her thought, she suddenly became aware of voices overhead. It was Captain Crosby and the mate, Peter, leaning over the rail, talking. She drew back under the poop-break and listened. “Stow that lingo, Peter. I can hardly understand it now. Speak in English.” It was Crosby who spoke.

“Alright, Vittorio,” came the mate’s growling tones. “Now what do I get for this business?”

“Wait until I marry the girl, you greedy swab,” answered the other. “How can I make promises at this stage of the game?”

“How much do you think her father is worth?”

“Oh, he’s got the rhino,” came Crosby’s reply. “Owns that big hooker, the *Wanderer*, and has a pile salted away. But what’s the use of jawing about what you’ll get? Wait until I’ve got her hitched.”

“You think de old man will open up his hold?”

“She’s the only child he’s got,” answered the other.

“If she won’t marry you, what then?”

“There are other ways. You know how it’s done in Crete. . . . in Sicily. . . . in Tunis.”

“Ransom?”

Dorothy felt the perspiration breaking out on her face and her heart almost ceased to beat. For a space she seemed to lose consciousness and when the sensation passed she found herself leaning against the cabin bulkhead and trembling violently. With an effort she regained control of her stunned faculties.

“I’ll dump that gaffer overboard when we get Anticosti abeam. He would swear a vendetta. The Irish are worse than the Corsicans when they hate. I fear that man.” Crosby’s voice carried concern.

“How about the warships?” The mate asked the question apprehensively.

“What have they got around these waters?” The reply came sneeringly. “A couple of fish patrols. I’ll run along the north shore of Anticosti and anchor off there for a week or two. By the time I’m ready for the run through Cabot Straits, they’ll have knocked off watching.”

There was silence for a minute, then Peter spoke. “I want a bottle of whiskey, Vittorio.”

“You can’t have it.”

“I must! I’m crazee for a drink. You’ll have to give it to me.”

“You’re not going to get one, Peter, so there’s an end to it,” said Crosby decisively. “Think I want to run the risk of you getting tight and babbling all you know? Not likely!”

There was a surly growl from the mate. “What am I getting out of this, anyway?” he snarled. “I get you the job as capitan of this vessel when the old capitan get sick. I help you steal the woman. I knock that Irishman on the head and save your life. I help you out in that *Rienzi*—”

“Don’t be foolish, Peter,” came Crosby’s placating tones. “You know how you talk when you’re drunk. You nearly blew the whole *Rienzi* story in Antwerp that time when you got on a batter.”

“That’s all right,” growled the other tenaciously, “but I must have a drink. I’m sick. You scare me with that dam’ yarn about killing the steward. The Irishman says the steward was alright. Why, you tell me that?”

The Englishman laughed. “I thought it would make you more anxious to help me. You have to be bribed before you’ll do anything. It took my mother to handle you.”

“*Cospetto!* Yes! She was a devil! The hell-cat of Gozo—the Ingleze sailors call her—a good name for a Maltee cat.” He chuckled and began talking in a strange tongue, appealing and threatening by the tone. In the same dialect, Crosby replied, and then eight bells was struck by the wheelsman and both men moved away.

Dorothy raced back into her room and feverishly locked the door. For a space she sat on the settee, white-faced, her heart beating furiously, her thoughts a mad confusion. Her few minutes of eavesdropping seemed to have unshipped her equilibrium. Everything was reversed and Crosby became a figure, dark, sinister and hateful. She was terribly frightened.

With an effort she assumed a state of more composure and endeavoured to marshal her panicky thoughts. With returning calm and order came a realization of her position. In one sudden sweep, her affection and regard for Crosby was completely blotted out. He was a liar, a cold-blooded villain, a despicable scoundrel. She recalled her father’s warning and O’Brien’s taunts: “There’s a snarl in yer brain and ye’re rotten inside somewheres.” The Irishman was right. It took men to judge men.

Her mind then focused on O’Brien and he appeared in her fancy now as a heroic figure, a sure shield in time of peril, but reflection blew these assurances to nothingness. O’Brien was manacled hand and foot and a prisoner in the lazarette. What could he do? She thought of his odd behaviour since a captive, his confidence, his taunting of Crosby, his loudly proclaimed statements of murder and warships Was the man’s declaration of a search by warships as fanciful as his tale of her father’s death? Then into her recollection came Crosby’s threat; “I’ll dump that gaffer overboard when we get Anticosti abeam” and she became panicky again. It seemed incomprehensible that Victor Crosby, the up-

standing, handsome, courteous, and English sailor could be possessed of a dual personality. She wondered if it wasn't a figment of imagination, an odd dream.

"I'll dump overboard. . . . Anticosti abeam." The words kept repeating themselves in her consciousness until all else seemed insignificant. It was like a mental spur to action. The Irishman, her friend and would-be rescuer, was in deadly danger and she must do something. Panic passed and she became calm and collected again.

"I can't get the keys to release him, but I might get a file," she thought. Files, on shipboard, she knew, were usually kept in the carpenter's shop of the boatswain's locker. The *Antonio* carried no carpenter but Dorothy had an idea that tools and ship's gear were kept in a store-room in the after end of the forecabin. She had seen the men carrying their scrapers and painting equipment there. "If I can sneak out and rummage in that place some time to-night, I'll get a file and toss it down to Mr. O'Brien." It seemed the only way. Any notion of appealing to the sailors to aid her was not worth consideration. They were dominated by their officers and would not dare to make a move.

The hours passed slowly and it seemed an interminable space of time between the half-hourly tolling of the bells. Dorothy had decided that the early morning—some time towards the tag-end of the middle watch—would best serve as the period for action. Men were sleepy then, vitality was at a low ebb and the soporific influence was strongest. The watch on deck would probably be curled up and snatching a nap on the deck and the officer on duty, the Frenchman, would in all probability be propping up his eyelids and endeavouring to keep awake. The man at the wheel could scarcely see the deck and the foresail would hide the look-out. The only one she feared was Crosby. He might well be vigilant.

The Englishman was on deck. Above her head, Dorothy could hear his quick pacing of the weather alley of the poop. She knew his step of old and had often felt a strange thrill in the sound of it when she was snuggling in her bunk aboard the *Wanderer* and he was keeping watch. Now, it seemed as though his foot-falls were pounding in her brain; drumming in her ears like the sinister padding of some predatory creature waiting, waiting, waiting. A few minutes of overheard conversation had reversed her feelings.

Three bells struck and by the ship's motion, the creaking of timbers, and outside noises, it was plain that wind and sea were rising. She looked out

through the port and saw that the stars had faded and that it was very dark. She sat up on the settee afraid to recline for fear of sleep overcoming her; then came four bells and the drone of a fog-horn. "Three blasts . . . fog!" she muttered, and with the evidence came the pleasing thought that the mist would aid her plans wonderfully. Her chances of slipping forward unobserved would be much easier.

"Lee fore brace!" Crosby's voice overhead sounded clear above the sea noises and fetched her up with a start. Familiarity with the manouvering of sailing ships told Dot that the wind was shifting ahead and that the men were ordered to brace the yards. They would brace the foreyards first and then the sailors would come up on the poop to man the main-braces. "A good time to slip forward," she murmured, and excitedly she rose, buttoned her jacket up around her throat and deftly tied a colored cotton handkerchief about her head. Cautiously opening the door of her room, she stepped out into the dim-lit cabin and tip-toed softly to the main-deck exit.

The door was still open and with her heart beating wildly, she looked out. The fog was dense and veiled everything from sight in a grey pall, wet and steamy. The watch were "hey-ho-ing!" at the lee fore-braces while the second mate slacked off to windward. She crouched inside the door, straining eyes and ears, waiting.

"Dat'll do de t'gallant brace," boomed the officer's voice. "Make fast! Main braces, now!"

Men came staggering out of the murk over the deck-load of spruce deals and she drew inside the shadow of the door as they clattered up the poop ladder. The French second mate came along the weather side and as soon as he mounted the poop, Dorothy clambered lightly up on top of the deck-load, and, stooping low, picked her way over the planks. In a few seconds she gained the fore-castle deck-house and groped along its dripping walls for the store-room door.

From aft out of the fog came the muffled cries of the sailors. "Haul away de main-brace!" came the officer's command. Dot knew she had but a few minutes to accomplish her object ere the men would be coming down off the poop. Her searching fingers struck the panels of a door—a sliding one—and she knew she had located the one she sought. Feverishly, she felt for the handle and her heart seemed to leap when a rope becket came within her grasp. With all her strength, she heaved upon it.

“Well de main-brace! Turn dat! Main-tops’l braces now!” came the officer’s commands. Time was flying. “If I can’t get back just now,” thought the girl, “I can remain inside until a chance to slip aft presents itself. Heavens! but this door is hard to move!” She gave a series of frantic pulls on the handle. The door slid back an inch or two and remained fast.

Perspiring with her efforts and with her heart pounding wildly, she desisted and began feeling for the obstruction. Her fingers struck a small chain. In an instant she realized the trouble. “Padlocked!” she gasped. For a space she stood dumbly fingering the hasp and the padlock, the blood drumming in her temples, her mouth quivering and her limbs trembling with nervousness and her exertions.

“Well de lower tops’l! Now de upper tops’l!” came the Frenchman’s voice.

Racing against time, she shook the door, pulled at the padlock, kicked at the stout panels with her stockinged feet. But a door built to stand the pounding of solid seas, and a padlock and hasp designed to discourage the efforts of pilferers, was not going to yield to the feeble strainings and kickings of a girl. She realized the hopelessness of the task and desisted.

“All right de tops’ls! To’ gallant braces now!” A minute or two remained for her to get back before the men came down. Almost crying with vexation, she turned, climbed up on the spruce deals and stumbled aft. A chain lashing tripped her and she fell full length. Slivers of wood drove into the tender skin of her hands and arms, her toes were bruised by contact with the chain. In her fall she struck something with her elbow which clinked against the deck-load fastenings. Rising hastily to her feet, she made a step forward, hesitated for a moment and then stooped and groped around on the lumber. With a little cry she picked up what she sought and hastily examined it by sense of touch. It was a scraper made from an old rasp—left on the deck-load by some careless seaman. Hugging it to her breast, she continued her passage towards the cabin.

Unobserved, as she thought, she clambered down off the deals and stepped over the wash-board of the cabin door. “To think that I should have found it,” she murmured audibly, pleurably thrilled by her good fortune. “An old rasp—” Her sentence ended in a startled shriek as strong fingers grasped her arms and dragged her into the dim-lit cabin. “What were you doing forward, Dorothy?” It was Victor Crosby and his grip of her

relaxed when he spoke. He turned up the light in the cabin lamp and gave her a keen scrutiny. Suddenly his hand shot out and he jerked the heavy scraper from her buttoned-up coat. For a moment, he seemed perplexed.

“What’s this for, Dot? A weapon?” His voice, soft-toned as ever, held a note of wonderment. “Surely you don’t feel like that towards me, girl?” She stood before him, dumb, a light of defiance and hatred in her eyes. He turned the scraper over in his hands, hefted it, and noting the look on her face, his lips compressed and his expression hardened. “Was this to be used against me, Dorothy?” The question came strident. The soft speech was gone.

“You can think what you like!” She snapped the words out, bitterly, almost viciously.

The man’s eyes narrowed, and he kept turning the iron over in his hand. “Would you really have tried to brain me with this?”

“Yes, I would!” she ejaculated, and as she spoke, she made a quick snatch for the scraper. Crosby was quicker, however, and knocked her hand aside. With an odd laugh, he threw the iron down on the cabin table and grasped Dorothy by the wrist. There was nothing gentle about his manner. “You’re lying, girl,” he said bluntly. “You hunted that thing up to release O’Brien.” The grip of his fingers on her wrist tightened. “Isn’t that so, Dorothy dear?” She began to struggle—wrenching at his gripping fingers with her free hand.

“Let me go, you—you beast!”

“To release Mister O’Brien,” he reiterated, his eyes smiling and his grip slowly increasing in intensity.

Dorothy cried out with pain and kicked him. He pushed out his arm and held her off, smiling cruelly as he increased the pressure. “Dear Mister O’Brien down in the lazarette.” Crosby seemed to be enjoying himself.

The girl felt that her wrist bones were about to crack and she became filled with a mad rage. “Let me go, you brute, you bully, you—you *hell-cat of Gozo!*” It slipped from her lips—the only expression she could think of at the moment—and its effect upon the man was startling.

“What!” He gripped her suddenly around the shoulders and drew her to him in an embrace of mixed fury and astonishment. She struggled like a wild-cat and he was forced to shift his grip to hold her. Her hair fell from out the handkerchief that bound it.

Seizing both her wrists, he held her impotent, while he regarded her with his dark eyes appraisingly, admiringly, yet the expression in them was a strange mixture of menace and admiration. "You heard, did you?" he said slowly. "Then the game is over. The mask is off, but I've got you." He released a hand and made a snatch at her coat. In his strong fingers the fabric ripped from its stitches and fell away. "I'll have you for my slave, Miss," he said tauntingly. "No more fawning and crawling to you. I'll break you to my will, and when I'm done with you I'll sell you in the slave market in Algiers." He made another grasp and tore away her undervest, revealing her white rounded shoulders and breast. "You'll sell for a pretty sum, Dorothy, dear . . . a pretty face and pretty figure . . . and a temper, my, what a temper!" Her face was the color of chalk and she seemed stricken dumb and incapable of moving a limb. "Yes, Dorothy, your face and figure'll bring me a few *piastres*. I'll break you in and sell you. . . and your dear friend O'Brien will go over the side before daylight——"

"*And will ye listen to the humor of that, now!*" Crosby released Dorothy in a flash and turned at the voice. Lounging easily in the after cabin door, with the sundered manacles on his wrists and ankles and a pistol in his right hand, was O'Brien. The girl drew some shreds of cloth over her naked shoulders and began to laugh hysterically.

The Englishman seemed spellbound for a space and then he began to bawl for the mate. "Peter! Peter! Help! Help!"

O'Brien, lazily leaning against the bulkhead, laughed serenely. "Ooch, don't be afther botherin' Peter," he said. "Shure and he's taken me place down in the lazareet and he'd have to chew up a few faddom of rope afore he'd get loose to help yez——"

Thud! With a sudden movement, Crosby had seized the scraper from the cabin table and had hurled it at the stevedore. Dorothy screamed as the Irishman ducked and the missile crashed into the panelling above his head. The smile faded from his face and the pistol was levelled as he barked out: "Another move, you scum, and I'll drill yez! Miss Munro, get into yer room. There's goin't to be some rowdy doin's here in a minute."

Dorothy slipped away and stood apprehensively within the doorway of her berth. "Inside and lock yer door, Miss!" came the Irishman's command. Reluctantly she obeyed but remained with her hands on key and door handle, listening.

“Now, Mister Man,” jeered O’Brien, “I’ve got you dead to loo’ard this time. Ye don’t need to look up at Frenchy through the skylight nor yell for the stoo’ard. Them gents are fr’inds of mine. Not a dam’ soul aboard will bear a hand to help yez, for they’re all me bosom pals. You and me are goin’ to have it out—”

Crosby seemed to recover his composure. “If it’s a fair stand-up fight you want,” he said calmly, “then I’m your man.”

“A fair stand-up fight it’ll be,” returned the other. He threw the pistol into the passageway back of him, and ere it ceased clattering along the deck, Crosby was upon him, his fists driving for the Irishman’s head and body.

The stevedore was ready and ducked the assault. Crosby’s fist struck the bulkhead and split a board from top to bottom. He took a terrible body blow from the Irishman’s right which jarred him and sent him back gasping and with his handsome features screwed up in pain. O’Brien sniggered. “Ye fight like a kid,” he jeered. “It’s only fair to tell yez I useter be a boxer wan time.” He deftly parried a vicious drive from the other’s left and ducked his head to a round arm swing which would have felled an ox had it landed. “Up around Quebec, at the fire stations, they useter match me wid the other kids.” He stopped a series of short jabs as he spoke. “And I c’d lick ’em all afore I went to sea.” He received a hard smack on his jaw and another on his shoulder, but they seemed to have no effect. “Yis. . . I licked ’em all. Fightin’ or talkin’, I c’d lick anny wan that stood up to me.” Desisting from the defensive, he drove a hard fist into Crosby’s chest and the man staggered over against the table.

“Ye showed a lack of brains, Mister Crosby, whin ye failed to gag me,” came the Irishman’s running comment. “None of the bright lads aboard here is hankerin’ for a Quebec jail. And that stoo’ard is a bright boy. He knows a thing or two, he does. . . .”

Through the skylight overhead the second mate was peering; the steward was nervously watching through his half-opened door, and in the forward entrance to the cabin, the crew of both watches were craning their necks to see and not daring to set foot through the restraint imposed by seafaring custom. From these polyglot sailormen came growls and chuckles of approval when the Irishman led or feinted, and silence when their skipper landed a telling blow. Inside her room, Dorothy was crouching on her knees by the door, her hands clasped around the handle of the lock, her head against the panels and ears straining to interpret the meaning in each sound of conflict.

In the cabin there was but little room to move about. The table and four chairs occupied most of the space and these were securely bolted to the deck. The two men stood at the after end of the apartment pounding away at one another under the uncertain light from the oil lamp suspended over the table. The decks were sloping as the barque heeled to the breeze and the Irishman stood to windward—thus equalling his adversary's advantage in height and length of reach.

Crosby knew something of the fistic art. He fought silently with lips compressed, brows lowered over flashing dark eyes. He was getting in a few hard blows and holding his own. He carried the battle to his enemy, raining swift jabs, leaping in and leaping out. The Irishman, with a supercilious grin on his face feinted, ducked and guarded. He seldom led off in a blow, but when he did, it told. "Och, but I'm playin' wid yez," he jibed, relapsing into the brogue. "Phwat are yez thryin' to do? Fannin' de flies away from me face? Sure, an' I thought yez was a foightin' man."

Crosby's dark eyes narrowed and became suddenly shifty. His mind had become momentarily detached from the business in hand, and like a keen pugilist, the stevedore noted it. He shot out his right fist and caught Crosby a sudden smash on the jaw which sent him reeling and sliding with a crash against the bulkhead to leeward.



When he rushed down on the Quebecker with a weather roll of the barque, the watchers yelled: "Look out! He has a knife!"

As quick as light, Crosby's right hand dived into his leather sea boot and when he rushed down on the Quebecker with a weather roll of the barque, the watchers yelled: "Look out! He has a knife!"

In the glow from the lamp it glinted; the Irishman twisted his body away in a swift movement, and when the sharp steel descended, the point missed its mark but ripped down O'Brien's left ribs and slashed through the flesh of his hip.

A throaty growl coincided with the impact of the stevedore's fist on the other's mouth and Crosby was hurled down to leeward again. "Ye dhirty son av a dog!" A torrent of waterfront oaths streamed from O'Brien's lips as he threw himself on his opponent. "You're no bloody Englishman, by cripes!" he roared. "A stinkin', knifin' dago, by Judas Priest!" He drove his boot into Crosby's stomach and in the excruciating agony of the blow, the knife fell from his fingers and clattered on the floor.

"Cut me, will yez? It's dhirty foightin' yez want?" O'Brien was as a man mad, a terrifying figure. "I'm th' lad, fair or dhirty! Damme! I'll give yez the

Mobile style. Here goes yer beauty, me bucko!”

Crosby had been pounded to the deck and was reaching for the knife when the stevedore’s heavy boot crashed into his face—breaking cartilages, teeth, ripping flesh—making of his god-like beauty a streaming ruin horrible to behold.

The onlookers stood appalled, stricken dumb by the horror of the combat and too frightened to interfere. The Irishman had the devil in him now and had become a reincarnation of barbaric Celtic forbears. Blood dripped from his cuts and sprinkled the white planks and the nip of the wounds fanned his fury. He hurled himself on his struggling and kicking adversary and his fingers groped across the broken face. “Mobile fashion,” he panted. “I’ll have yer eyes out, by cripes! Cut me, will yez? I’ll gouge you, by Godfrey!” Crosby struggled and screamed as a thumb drove into an eye socket. Then, as though through a mad red mist in which flames and crimson stars were reeling, the Irishman felt a tugging on his arms and a girl’s appealing voice: “Don’t, oh don’t for God’s sake! Larry! Larry! Stop! Stop!”

He rose to his feet dazedly and wiped the hair and sweat out of his eyes. Dorothy’s arms were around his, clasping them to his sides, and her face, pallid and tear stained, looked up into his appealingly. “I forgot meself,” he croaked hoarsely. “But—but he cut me, so he did . . . cut me . . . he’s not a man—not a man.” He stood panting, his manacled wrists by his side, the shirt torn off one shoulder.

While he stood thus with the girl’s arms around his body, there came loud shouts from the deck and Dorothy drew suddenly away. A look of terror flashed into her eyes and she turned and shook O’Brien who panting heavily, swaying with the roll of the ship, was staring apathetically at a dark figure crawling into the darkness of the alleyway. “Do you hear, Larry?” she shrieked. “A steamer! A steamer! Bearing down in the fog!”

The instincts of the seaman at the dread hail revived in the man and he comprehended instantly. He kept his feet in a wild lurch of the ship which sent Dorothy flying to leeward against the cabin walls, and ran for the after companion. But ere he reached the steps, the barque heeled to a staggering blow, there came the sound of rending and smashing timber, wild shouting, the swash and roar of water and the tremendous thuds of falling

spars. “Sufferin’ cats, she’s bin run down!” he bawled as he rose to his feet, and up the ladder he leaped with the speed of fear.

A quick glance around in the gloom revealed chaos. The barque wallowed drunkenly, head to swell, her fore and main topmasts gone, the lower shrouds and stays an inextricable tangle of yards, rope and flogging canvas. The soggy roll of her and the forward slope of the decks told that she was settling by the head. The fog still hung thick around and out of the mist came the excited shouts of men struggling with a life-boat. A siren was blowing raucously somewhere astern.

“Stand by, there, men!” roared O’Brien. “She can’t sink.” Then in a flash, he remembered Dorothy and his late adversary and he jumped down the cabin ladder, again shouting their names.

In the dark passageway, he blundered into something human. “Is that you, Miss?” he called, feeling for her body in the dark. There came a sound as of the rapid intake of a breath and ere his searching fingers could clasp anything, the blackness seemed suddenly bright with red flame and he slumped to the deck.

He regained consciousness again in a few minutes, gasping and choking with his mouth full of salt water and the chill of it on his skin. At first he thought he was overboard, but as his brain emerged from the numbness caused by a blow on the head, he realized that he was lying on the lee of the cabin alley in a few inches of water which was swashing around with the sluggish roll of the vessel.

“The divil, the dhirty divil!” he groaned, rising painfully to his feet. Clutching the hand-rail, he swayed, hazily endeavoring to reconstruct the events of the night. “Ah, yis. . . . she was run down and I was seekin’ her when some wan slugged me Crosby, belike. Ah, yis!” In the dark, he started trudging towards the dim light of the open companion and then, amidst the buzzing and drumming in his ears, he realized that voices were calling.

“Larry! Larry! Oh, Larry!”

He paused on hearing the cry and a slow smile broke over his battered features. “I’m here, Miss Dorothy!” he croaked. She had called him “Larry” he remembered and the thought pleased him. Then to his ears came other sounds—muffled shouts, high pitched, frantic, and seemingly below his feet.

“The dago mate, b’gorry! I clane forgot the poor swab!” He took a grip on himself and lurched towards the companion. “Alright! Alright!” he cried out reassuringly. Looking up towards the deck he made out Dot’s form against the sky. She was bending over the wash-board, peering below. “Oh, Larry, but I thought you were gone,” she almost wailed.

“Sure, and I’m alright, Miss. . . . Dorothy,” he replied. “A little groggy, maybe. Where’s the others?”

“All gone. I thought I was alone on the ship.” She began to cry.

“Wheesht! Don’t take on so, acushla. Shure and we’re all right. The old hooker won’t sink, and I’ll be with you in a minute afther I haul the dago out the lazareet. He’ll be goin’ crazy if he remains below much longer.” He turned and made his way in the dark to the lazarette hatch aft of the companion steps. Pulling it up, he was confronted by the face of Peter, pallid in the gloom, and just clear of the water which almost filled the compartment. A strong pull and the mate was hauled out, dripping like a fish, whining and jabbering in excess of fear.

“Och, shure, and I niver meant to lave ye below, old son,” said O’Brien reassuringly, “but when I was coming to let yez out, your chum Crosby hit me a clip with something and knocked me dead-oh.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” jabbered the other, his eye-balls rolling and his teeth chattering with the chill of the water and the fright he had endured. “Dam’ Crosby pig. Make plenty trouble for me. What happened?”

The Irishman briefly outlined the incidents of the night and groping for the knot of the lashing which bound the man, he cast it adrift, helped him to his feet and half-dragged, half-carried him to the companion and thence on deck. Peter’s experience in the lazarette had soaked all the vindictiveness out of him.

It was still dark and the fog veiled everything. He set the numbed mate down against the cabin trunk and turned to the forlorn figure huddled against the lee side of the wheel-box. She was shivering with the cold and crying. His arm slipped over her shoulders as he dropped beside her on the deck. “Arrah, now, honey, don’t take on so. Shure, she’ll float ’till Kingdom Come and daylight will see us picked up.” He bent his swollen lips until they touched her wet hair and felt a rare thrill in the contact. He drew her towards him and she made no resistance. “Are ye chilled, Dorothy? Begorry, if it’s sufferin’ from the cold you are, I’ll rip the duds off the dago

there. . .” She shook her head with a wan smile. “I’m not cold now—only miserable and silly and childish.”

“Never mind, acushla, the sun’ll be along soon and the fog’ll lift and we’ll have a day as clear as a bell,” he murmured hopefully. “I can see the glint of the dawn, now, and the mist is breakin’ away. With the sea smoothing out and the wind to the west, shure, it’s no sailor’s daughter that’s going to worry about a small matter like this. It’s rescued we’ll be afore another night comes.” He forgot the pain of his cuts and bruises with her leaning on his breast with her cheek against his and her sodden tresses blowing across his eyes. And he was patting and caressing her and murmuring soft phrases to calm her fears.



He held her in his arms throughout the hour of dawn and the growing light revealed the wreck upon which they floated.

He held her in his arms throughout the hour of dawn and the growing light revealed the wreck upon which they floated. A few feet forward of the foremast, the bows had been shorn clean off and the barque had slowly settled until her decks were awash. The grey light seemed to accentuate the tangled and splintered spars and torn canvas. But in keeping with the vessel’s shape was the plight of O’Brien himself. His reddish hair

was plastered over his face with water and congealed blood, his face was cut and swollen and his lips were puffed and bleeding. Every once in a while, he winced to the smart of wounds.

Dorothy, with woman's intuition, guessed that he was suffering, and she drew out from his embrace and regarded him keenly in the half-light. "Did he stab you?" she questioned anxiously.

O'Brien's hand wandered stiffly to his left side. She followed the involuntary movement and noticed the ripped shirt and the dark stains of blood. "I reckon he fetched me a slash across the ribs and a prod in the hip, belike, but what's that to a grown man?" He grinned painfully.

The girl's eyes grew wide with concern and she seemed to recover her poise. "Take up your shirt and let me see!" she said.

The man hesitated. "No, don't be afther botherin' your head with me moskitty bites. 'Tis nawthin' at all at all—"

"Up with it!" she commanded. "I've dressed the broken ribs of sailors before now, so don't be shy." Blushing, he obeyed, and revealed a long red slash athwart his side—a terrible looking wound. Truly, the man had the endurance and stamina of a tiger.

Turning her back, Dorothy made some deft movements and produced a white linen petticoat. O'Brien's battered visage turned a deeper red when she began ripping it up. But as the dawn stole over the quiet sea, the washing and bandaging went on and the Irishman stood erect to her ministering, with his teeth clenched and a smile in his eyes. And Peter the mate sat on the house, apathetic and staring into the fog, never saying a word.

O'Brien had rummaged some food and drink from out the half-submerged pantry and after they had feasted on it, Peter spoke. "Mister O'Brien," he began hesitatingly. "Ah—you don't remember me?"

The other, sucking away at a damp pipe, favored him with a keen glance. "Can't say as I do!" He paused, his eyes narrowing as the fleeting memory of something familiar in the man's face came to him. "Now, by the powers, let me see. Your looks—"

"Yes, I grow whisker. I grow fat, maybe," the mate interrupted. "But you know me. I was the man at the wheel on the *Rienzi!*"

The Irishman drew up as though shot: his swollen jaws bulged and his fists clenched and drew up towards his waist. Stealing a furtive glance at Dorothy, he licked his lips and fixed his eyes on the other man with an apprehensive and somewhat belligerent glint in them.

“By the old Judas! so ye are,” he exclaimed huskily. He stared at the man as though expecting a blow, then his expression suddenly changed and became menacing.

“Another yap from you about the *Rienzi* and I’ll heave yez into the drink.”

The man waved a protesting hand. “No, no, Mister—”

“Another yap from—” began O’Brien, and he stopped suddenly.

Who-o-oo! Who-o-oo! Who-o-oo! A siren whistle seemed to rend the mist with a tremendous crescendo of sound and the three on the wreck jumped and faced the direction from whence it came. “Ahoy! ahoy! ahoy!” bawled the Irishman in echo to the blast. He turned and smacked the mate on the shoulder. “Come on, you tARRIER, yell yer head off! They’re close aboard!”

Who-o-oo! came a short blast. The cries of the men sounded in the lightening fog and there came the rattle and squeal of blocks and the splash of a boat into the water. Voices cut through the mist: “Ship your oars, men, give way! To the nor’ad, sir . . . yes, sir . . . I ’ears them, sir.” Came the regular dip and swish of oars pulling in trained stroke, then through the pall appeared a white boat manned by uniformed men. “Blue-jackets!” ejaculated O’Brien. “A British man-o-war.”

Peter’s face paled under its tan and he plucked at the stevedore’s sleeve.

“Capitan O’Brien! *Madonna mia!*” he dropped into broken English in his terror. “Don’ you letta me go to jail. I tella you something. I tella you all . . . mucha good for you. I tella ’bout de *Rienzi*—”

The Irishman glared at him. “You open yer trap about that aboard that vessel,” he snarled viciously, “and I’ll hunt yez down to the deepest hell an’ cut the heart out yez. Remember!”

The boat swung dexterously alongside and the bow-man hooked on while a uniformed officer clambered over the low rail of the water-logged barque. He extended his hand to the Quebecker. “Well, sir, glad to have picked you up at last . . . a long search. And the young lady—” He

bowed curtly towards Dorothy. “Miss Munro, I believe . . . and everybody’s all right.” He looked around. “Where’s the skipper of this packet—the man Crosby?”

Mystified at the officer’s glib knowledge of names and events, O’Brien answered. “He’s gone. I don’t know where. Maybe drowned, or he may have escaped in the boats with the men—”

The other shook his head. “No, he wasn’t with them. We picked the crew up this morning early—ten men. No chance of him being below decks somewhere, is there?” He turned to the boat alongside. “Jones! Anderson! Come aboard and have a look below and see if you can locate another man. Cabin’s half full of water but his body may be there. Smartly, now!”

While the blue-jackets were making a search, the lieutenant escorted Dorothy to the boat and handed her down into the stern-sheets. She looked pale and exhausted and her appearance brought a kindly, “We’ll only be a minute or so, Miss,” from the officer.

Peter had remained apprehensively quiet during the proceedings, but while the sailors were opening skylights and companion doors and peering below, he touched O’Brien’s arm timidly and pointed to some ring-bolts and cut lashings of rope on top of the cabin trunk. “We had a small Norwegian punt there, Capitan,” he observed, “I think maybe dat Crosby get away in dat.”

The other examined the ropes critically. “Gorry, but I believe you’re right. He c’d easily swing a painting punt over. That’s what’s he’s done, sure enough.”

“A queer business,” remarked the lieutenant when his attention had been called to the missing boat. “The men we picked up had a deucedly odd yarn to tell . . . kidnapping and the murder of a merchant skipper in Quebec . . . and your entry into the little drama. We must get our hands on this Crosby fellow. Murder and kidnapping . . . quite serious, y’know.”

The Irishman laughed. “Och, Mister, but there was no murder in it,” he explained softly that the mate might not hear. “That was my little bluff.

I harped on that so’s to throw a scare into this hooker’s crew and make them come to me rescue. And it worked, by Godfrey, for they got so frightened with me yarn of a murdered skipper and me tale of warships hunting this packet that they made the steward fetch me a file and I released

mesilf.” He held out his ironed wrists. “It was while I was havin’ a rannkaboo with this man Crosby that some steamboat ran us down—”

“I regret to say that we were the vessel that hit you,” cut in the other. “You were showing no lights and sounding no horn and it was thicker than mud. We’ve been steaming around here since the collision looking for survivors.”

“Nothin’ as we can find below, sir,” reported one of the searching seamen. “I’ll go into the water if ye say so, sir, and have a good look-see below with a lantern.”

The lieutenant hesitated for a moment. “No, never mind. The man got away in that punt, I believe. We’ll get aboard.”

On H.M.S. *Hyacinth*, sloop-of-war, the dapper young naval surgeon had had two patients who required his attention. Rest in a comfortable berth, warm clothing and a sedative for unstrung nerves, brought Dorothy around to a normal condition before nightfall, for a healthy young woman can recover quickly. But O’Brien, in the sick bay, was a more serious case. There was some surgical stitching to a damaged scalp, much bruise rubbing and cut plastering, and something more than petticoat bandaging on a knife slash across the ribs and a two inch stab in the hip.

“By Jove,” remarked the doctor cheerfully, as he worked over the Quebecker, “but the Lord certainly used good stuff when he made you. I wonder you didn’t collapse from loss of blood. And how did you manage to move with those knees of yours?”

But O’Brien recked little of these things. His most serious wounds were of the heart and mind and as he lay, plastered and bandaged, he thought of Dorothy Munro and the future. Could he hope? His memory dwelt on the early morning hours in the fog when she lay with her head on his breast. . . . Would she recall that? Or would it be passed over as a period of hysterical emotion induced by stress and dismissed as a momentary weakness?

Then into the perplexed, but not necessarily despairful, fancy of his desires, her sinister shadow of his disgrace would intrude itself—the affair of the *Rienzi*. He began to wonder if the man Peter would talk and the thought caused him to cringe and break out in a clammy sweat. “If he does . . . !”

Lying in his berth, he cast his memory back to the events leading up to the incident which blasted his seafaring life. He could recall most of the occurrences in his existence with clarity, but this matter always seemed hazy. The *Rienzi* was a new vessel, built at Quebec as a speculation and sold to an owner in Sicily. The agent who made the sale asked him to deliver the ship at a port in the Baltic. Crosby represented the owner in some manner, but Crosby held no certificate permitting him to take command. O'Brien, a master mariner, made a business of delivering Quebec-built ships to foreign owners. He contracted to deliver the *Rienzi* with considerable reluctance. He was suffering from fever and cold when he sailed from Quebec and his sickness hung to him all the passage across the Atlantic. The weather was stormy and necessitated his constant vigilance and he kept himself on his feet by dosing with quinine and whiskey. His recollections of the voyage were fragmentary. He could remember certain events only with distinctness. There were entries in the ship's log-book that he did not remember making though he could not deny his own handwriting. "Maybe, being sick and scarcely knowing what I was about, I might have drunk too much liquor—that could easily happen. But, I don't believe I ever did, for there were only three bottles aboard and we were thirty days out when the business happened. Yet Crosby and that man Peter and the steward swore I was blind drunk and the hell of it is that I couldn't say whether I was or not."

He shuddered at the memory of his arrival in Copenhagen, his flight into Holland, and the published censure of the British Consul—"conduct . . . despicable—a coward . . . disgrace to the British Merchant Service." The words were burned indelibly into his memory. He had read a copy of the letter. A friendly official in Quebec had hushed the matter up, but never a night had passed since then but what the affair had tortured his thoughts. But for the love he bore his widowed mother, he would have stolen away and dropped off a dock and ended it all.

The evening came, and after the surgeon had made his examination, he opened the door of the hospital and admitted Dorothy. "A visitor," he announced with a smile, "and I'll break the regulations for half-an-hour anyway."

She stood silent, her eyes taking in his bandaged head, the pallor of his bruised face, and her imagination pictured the raw knife gash across the white skin of his body. The man had suffered thus for her sake. There was a sickening smell of iodoform.

“God bless my soul, acushla,” O’Brien was the first to speak, “but ye’re crying. I hope ’tis not me that would be coaxing the tears from the purty eyes of you—”

She came over to the cot and nervously grasped his hands. “Oh, Larry, but I hope you’ll soon be better. It was for me—”

“Och, shure now, but I’d take tin times the hammering for the likes of yourself if ’twas but your smile I would have for payment. They can’t hurt me—I’m an injy-rubber man.”

They talked for a few minutes when a tap came on the door and the lieutenant—he of the boat—entered. He gave the man and the girl a quizzical glance and drawled in courteous English, “I’m sure you will pardon this intrusion, but we’ve unearthed some deucedly odd information from that—er—foreigner whom we took off along with you—”

“The dago mate, Peter?” queried O’Brien quickly, and with a sinking sensation around his heart, “God’s truth!” he prayed mentally, “but I hope the beggar hasn’t been telling.”

The officer nodded. He was young and boyish in appearance and the Irishman scanned his face anxiously—almost anticipating the scornful curl of the lip and the cold stare of one who had heard the ugly story. But the officer’s face expressed no such feeling and O’Brien hoped for the best.

“This Johnny came to our Number One and began chinning about some funny business aboard a ship called the *Rienzi*.” The stevedore’s heart seemed to turn over inside his breast; his lip tightened and the blood seemed to leave his face. Dorothy, her eyes riveted on the Lieutenant, slipped her hand across the sheet and caught the Irish man’s nerveless fingers.

“From his yarn,” continued the officer, “we gathered that you were master of this *Rienzi* packet; our kidnapping friend Crosby was mate, and this Johnny dago was before the mast. Is that right?” The other nodded dumbly.

“According to the man’s story, your ship ran down a fishing boat in the Baltic and no attempt was made to stand-by and pick up survivors. Some men were drowned. You were supposed to be on deck at the time, and—er—it was stated that you were drunk and you refused to come about and save the fellows in the water. For this, the Admiralty Court snaffled your ticket, and—er—gave you a sort of a jolly rotten discharge. Am I correct?” A hoarse croak from O’Brien was the only answer.

A smile appeared on the navy man's boyish features. "Our foreign friend now tells us that the whole bally business was a put-up job on you—"

"What?" Both Larry and Dot gave voice to the ejaculation.

"—And that you were not on deck at the time the collision occurred. This Crosby chap was officer of the watch and was having a snooze on the poop when your ship hit the fisherman. This dago Johnny was at the wheel and he received his orders to keep off from Crosby, who, I imagine, realized he was in a jolly mess and wasn't man enough to stand the gaff."

"I was a sick man at the time," observed O'Brien huskily, "and I haven't any recollection of what happened."

"Yes, so I understand," said the other. "You apparently came on deck a few minutes after the mishap, but you were delirious with fever or something and began shouting a lot of meaningless commands. Your mate, Crosby, was astute enough to take advantage of your condition and to concoct a story placing the blame on you."

"But, Peter, the man at the wheel—why did he go on the stand and swear by Crosby's yarn?"

"That's the odd part of it," answered the officer. "This dago Johnny happens to be Crosby's step-father. That relationship, some threats or a bribe . . . not hard to get a man to perjure himself."

"Crosby's step-father?" O'Brien looked dazed. Dorothy, recalling the conversation she had overheard, saw a light and broke in excitedly: "Why, that explains something. Crosby's mother . . . belonged to Gozo or some such place."

"Yes," asserted the other. "Gozo is correct. Our commander was able to identify this Crosby fellow. He was a one-time ship's boy aboard H.M.S. *Vernon* at Malta. His father was a naval officer of good family but disreputable character, who got—er—mixed up with a Maltese woman. This Crosby was picked up out of the Valetta gutters, as it were, by someone who wished to give the beggar a fair chance and he was given a good education in the naval school and afterwards placed on the *Vernon*. He deserted the *Vernon* after scoffing a lot of the ward-room silver and the money in the purser's safe. Turned out a regular bad egg—running around with Arab traders in the Med. and such-like. Our skipper remembers the chap, as he was on the *Vernon* at the time." He paused, smiling pleasurably at being the harbinger of glad tidings. "Briefly, this is the yarn your shipmate has been

spinning the skipper,” he added, “and, no doubt, you’re jolly glad to hear it. My congratulations.”

He departed hastily, for he had an inkling that something momentous would follow his recital. For a young man, he was wise in his day and generation.

And two weeks later, the Anchorville ship *Wanderer* was loaded according to contract by the O’Brien Stevedoring Company. In the ship’s cabin, Captain Ezekiel Munro paid over the money to Larry and expressed his opinion that he, O’Brien, had made a good thing out of it. “You’ve not only got the price for the job,” he remarked, “but you’ve scoffed of girl as well. Now, I’ve a little something to say to you, m’lad, for I don’t intend to be left adrift on a lee shore. If you’re going to marry my girl, you’ll knuckle down to my terms.”

“And that is, sir?”

“You’ll take command of my ship and you’ll carry your wife to sea with you. Old Man Munro will go along as a passenger and enjoy life. You ain’t a Blunose, son, but from what I see and know of you, I reckon you’ll hold your end up with any spruce-gum hell-bender that ever skippered a Nova Scotiaman!”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *The Timber Stower* by Frederick William Wallace]