CROSS TRAILS



HAROLD BINDLOSS

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The Wilderness Patrol
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Northwest!
The Man from the Wilds
Kit Musgrave's Luck
Lister's Great Adventure
The Wilderness Mine
Wyndham's Pal
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Thrice Armed
By Right of Purchase
Delilah of the Snows
For Jacinta
Winston of the Prairie
The Dust of Conflict
Alton of Somasco
The Cattle Baron's Daughter

CROSS TRAILS

By HAROLD BINDLOSS

Author of "Carson of Red River," "Green Timber," "The Wilderness Patrol," "The Bush-Rancher," "Northwest!," "The Man From the Wilds," "Kit Musgrave's Luck," "Lister's Great Adventure," "The Wilderness Mine," etc.



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CHAPTER I

CARLYON'S CLAIM

THE SEATTLE train rolled away into the woods, and Bob Seward, at the little shiplap post-office, collected his re-directed mail: two or three letters for his father and one with an English stamp for him. He knew the hand, for Jake Carlyon was not a neat writer, but now Bob thought his untidiness was rather marked. Pushing the letters into his pocket, he dragged a small dinghy across the gravel beach and pushed off.

After a few minutes he stopped rowing and let the oars trail in the clear green water. The evening was hot and the tide, running down the inlet, carried him along. Giant pines bordered the stony beach, and where the underbush ended, winter storms had piled a driftwood fringe. The red sunset shone behind the dark straight trunks, and a rosy flush touched the snowy Olympic range. Languid ripples splashed on the gravel, and in the dim woods cowbells chimed. Bob smelt sweet resinous smells and rejoiced to be back. He sprang from New England stock and had grown to manhood in France, but the glorious Canadian Pacific slope was home.

The dinghy floated down the inlet and he let himself go slack. He had pulled off his coat, and his thin shirt was tight upon his arched chest and muscular arms. Bob was an athletic young fellow and had carried an infantry man's heavy pack, but something of his sturdiness was inherited from ancestors who used the shipwright's ax. When he arrived from Toronto University a week since, his father brought the sloop across the strait and met him at Vancouver. Bob had resumed his studies, broken by the war,

mainly because the old man had urged it, for he felt himself a stranger among the boys who had not known the strain he had borne in France.

When Bob joined the sloop at Vancouver, John Seward steered for a town up the strait where he transacted some business at the office of a manufacturing company. Seward knew the president and treasurer, and he presented Bob.

"My son," he said with a touch of pride. "Since he's going to be my partner and undertake my liabilities, I'm showing him around."

Now that Bob thought about it, he was rather moved. Perhaps the old man's remark was strange, but Sewards paid their debts, and Bob, recapturing the interview, approved his father's line. The company had asked for tenders for building a steamboat wharf.

"We like your construction plans," said the president. "The drawback is, another house is willing to put up our wharf for less. Can you cut the price?"

"I could, but I must cut the scantling sizes, and I don't want to. How much must come off?"

The treasurer replied and Seward shook his head.

"No, sir. For a proper job, I'm not charging high."

Bob knew his father did not boast. Seward's jobs were good; and the president smiled.

"Our duty is to squeeze you, John. The money we handle is the stockholders'."

"Then, if a thousand-dollar cut would help——"

"Oh, shucks!" said the treasurer. "You're not negotiating at a settlement grocery."

Seward got up. "Well, you know my limit——"

"Send for the agreement," said the president. "John is obstinate, but his wharves stand."

That was all, and Bob thought it characteristic. The old man was not plausible, but one knew his word went.

In the meantime, Seward waited for his mail and Bob began to row.

The sloop rode behind a point. She was all white and the pale reflections at her water-line wavered on the rippling tide. Her big mainsail was loosely furled along the boom, but a faint smell of gasoline indicated an auxiliary engine. She was beautifully modeled, and John had built her, at the Seward yard, for his son. He smoked his pipe on the cabin top, and Hester Seward occupied a red cushion in the cockpit.

Hester's clothes were fashionable and Seward's were good. His hands were smooth like a business man's hands, but he was strongly built and his big shoulders were bent. Somehow one knew he was once a workman.

"You got the mail?" he said, and took the letters.

Bob sat down on a coiled rope and tore open the envelope with the English stamp. After a few minutes he looked straight in front, and Hester remarked his knitted brow and firm mouth. Bob was obviously bothered; he was perhaps not very keen, but he weighed things, and when he saw his line went forward stubbornly. Hester waited, and by and by Seward put his mail aside.

"The cannery people have signed the agreement for the landing pier, and the fishing company want two big boats. We're full up at the yard for the next eight months. But now I want to talk about another thing. You made good at Toronto, Bob. I reckon it was something of a pull?"

"That is so, sir," Bob admitted, with a smile. "After France, I hadn't much use for books; I wanted to get to work. All the same, the plan was yours and mother's, and I felt I mustn't let you down."

"Your mother was a great woman, Bob. She looked ahead, and she meant to steer you farther than I could go. You were to get the culture she and I had not. When you had finished at the university, you must have a year in Europe——"

"I got four years, sir."

"In the mud and the battle-line! Well, you were a boy when you started and you came back a man, but pain and horror were not what your mother planned for you to know. You were to study the big things men in the old times built—cathedrals, palaces and bridges. She meant you to see great pictures and hear great music; to get a grip on foreign politics and social economies.

"Well, sometimes talking's foolishness, but you put it across at the university, and we must know where we are. The rough-neck boss is going: the machines we make will soon knock him out. Cheap power is beating muscle, and the new boss must use his brain. Maybe I'm near the limits my type cannot pass, but my son must push on with the modern gang, and I'd like him to lead. Well, I guess you get my argument?"

Bob knew the argument was sound, but he smiled. One talked about *coincidence*!

"Jake Carlyon suggests I go across and stay with him," he said, and gave Seward the letter. "He's at a country house in Scotland. I think the house is his. The invitation's rather urgent; I feel he wants me."

Hester looked up. Although she turned her head quickly, her glance was calm. Hester was an attractive girl, and Bob had thought Jake interested her, but it was some time ago and perhaps he exaggerated.

"You met Jake in France?" she said.

"In Belgium," said Bob, and although he had in his letter described the romantic meeting, he was willing to narrate the adventure another time. To do so might help him see his line.

"It was when I stopped the shrapnel," he resumed. "Our lot was going back in the dark and snow. Fritz's guns searched the road, but all I knew was I was on a stretcher, and the boys who carried me slipped about in the mud. By and by one was hit and let go the poles. I came off the canvas, and the other bearer got a light. I saw his badge was the badge of an English battalion that had supported us.

" 'My pal's all in. Looks as if we must wait for Fritz,' he said, and I knew Jake's voice.

"Well, I tried to argue Fritz need not get us both, but I was numb and my leg hurt, and maybe I wasn't very keen to persuade Jake. Anyhow, he gave me a cigarette and said he meant to stay. By and by an English officer came along. He was lost, but he reckoned Fritz was not far off, and he and Jake picked up the stretcher. Ten minutes afterwards a shrapnel burst, the officer was hit and I was in the snow. Jake pulled me back on the canvas, and until I got to the clearing station I knew nothing more."

"Jake stayed with you?" said Hester.

"Of course! He came to see me afterward in the hospital. He didn't know who the officer was and I don't yet know, but two men who helped Jake pack me out went West. Sometimes he talked like my old pal; sometimes I thought him queer. He owned he was badly rattled when Fritz dropped a high explosive on a ruined house where he and some others were at work. Well, I haven't seen him since I left the hospital, and now he wants me to look him up. I feel I ought to go."

"You've *got* to go," said Seward, and studied the letter.

On the surface, Carlyon's invitation was careless, but Seward sensed an elusive and perhaps half-conscious appeal. Moreover, he thought the sprawling hand ominous. It looked as if Jake did need Bob; but Seward had no other son, and the boy had been away for long.

In the meantime, Bob lighted his pipe and looked about. The rosy flush had melted from the Olympics and the snow was white against the dark blue sky. On the other side, the sunset was green and red behind the giant trunks. Dark forest rolled down to the glimmering water, and the light wind carried

resinous scents. All was calm and fresh and bracing, and Bob admitted he wanted to be at home. He had known adventure and had had enough, but the English letter called.

"I'm going to talk about Jake's father, and you'll weigh the story," Seward resumed. "Hammersley St. John Carlyon was a British navy officer and a white man. Well, you know he was my partner, and although his sort use long names he called his son for me, John Carlyon. I reckon he meant the boy to be a good Canadian.

"Our folks were Gloucester ship-carpenters, and your mother helped at a grocery. She was ambitious, wages back East were low, and soon after we married we pulled out for Portland, Oregon. For a time I held my job at a repair yard, but the big soft-wood wheat ships were going, and by and by the yard shut down. Patching up a wooden tug at Seattle broke me; the local bosses had a plan to freeze out independent strangers, and we went down Puget Sound to British Columbia. At Hundred Springs I built a sailboat for Carlyon. He liked the boat, the halibut fishery was starting, and he offered to guarantee I'd pay for tools and lumber.

"When I got to work he'd loaf around and smoke his pipe. Carlyon knew all about a boat. He was a navy officer, but I don't know his rank and I don't know his ship; Carlyon didn't talk about things like that. His wife was English—a beautiful, proud woman; but your mother was her friend."

Seward stopped to light his pipe and Bob mused. Although he had not known Mrs. Carlyon, who was long since dead, he wondered why a rich navy officer and his beautiful wife were satisfied to live in the woods. Bob thought his father knew, but the old man would not enlighten him.

"By and by a new fishing company asked for tenders for boats and Carlyon made a proposition: if I would start a small yard, he'd put up the money," Seward resumed. "Your mother urged me to agree; and the business went ahead. We built schooners for the sealing fleet, and when the sealing stopped we launched small tugs for the lumber companies, and put up piers and wharves. Now the yard is famous; but I don't want to boast. . . . What I want you to weigh is—but for Carlyon, I might have remained a carpenter."

Bob doubted. He thought his father's shrewdness, industry and integrity accounted for much. Perhaps Bob was an optimist, but he was persuaded that a square deal did pay.

"When Carlyon died, Jake started for the Old Country," he remarked.

"He wanted to go before, but his father was not willing," said Hester in a thoughtful voice. "Jake felt he was English; in a way he was English, and

when mother talked about your going to Toronto, he declared Oxford was his university."

"I didn't know——" said Bob, and stopped.

He thought it strange, but Hester obviously knew much about his pal that he did not. Well, Jake was marked by a queer, reckless vein, and sometimes he had puzzled Bob.

"You were trustee for Carlyon's estate, sir," he said.

"That is so," Seward agreed. "Jake inherited a useful sum, and I had reckoned he and you would carry on the yard, but in England he met up with his father's relations. Maybe they persuaded him, for as soon as the deed allowed he claimed the money."

"He took all of it?" said Bob with surprise.

"All but his father's share in the yard," Seward replied. "I got Carlyon's interest fixed by arbitration, and so long as the sum stands in our books Jake's my partner. Well, he wants you to go over. Stay twelve months, and see all you can. Stay longer if you think you ought to see Jake out."

He pulled back the sliding hatch and the cabin skylights began to shine. The faint red reflections melted from the water, and the woods got dark. Pale stars dotted the serene sky, the tide rippled at the bows, and in the distance a loon called.

"Father's stanch," Hester remarked.

"The old man's fine!" Bob agreed. "At Toronto one got highbrow talk about our politicians and business men that made me tired. Well, I suppose we have some poisonous grafters and unscrupulous fakirs, but I know another type: men whose word goes and who do all they undertake. Keen for a bargain maybe, but just; taking steep chances and paying when they lose. Men with a stake in the country, who push the country ahead. Well, I doubt if I've got the old man's talents, but I'm proud to be his son."

"You are like father, Bob," said Hester quietly. "Sometimes perhaps you're slow, but you're stubborn and get where you want. Jake's another sort; he goes by impulse and he doesn't calculate. He's very generous, but he has not your sober balance, and sometimes I think Carlyon doubted his English relations. At all events he wanted Jake to stay in Canada. I had hoped you'd now stay home for good; but I'm glad you're going, Bob."

She went off soon afterward, but Bob lingered and smoked. His father and Hester thought he ought to go. It looked as if he did not know his pal as they knew Jake. Sometimes, perhaps, he was not very bright. Anyhow, Jake was his pal, and when the Sewards were wanted their habit was to be about.

CHAPTER II

JAKE CARLYON

SOON after the Donaldson liner reached the Clyde, Bob, carrying a canvas kit-bag, got down from the boat train at Prince's Pier. He had sent on his trunk from Glasgow, but Carlyon's yawl was at Greenock, and Bob would need some clothes for their cruise to the Solway. For them to meet at Greenock and go by sea was Jake's plan, and Bob was willing. He had not seen his friend for four or five years, and on board the little boat they would have opportunities for intimate talk they might not get at a crowded country house.

Carlyon pushed through the jostling passengers, and Bob thought his impetuous haste typical. Jake was a handsome, rather lightly built young fellow and when he gave Bob his hand his satisfaction was plain.

"It's great to see you!" he exclaimed. "You have got bigger, but you're the solid, sober old Bob I knew. In fact, one feels you stand for permanence! But how is Hester? And your father?"

Bob said his relatives were well, and Carlyon studied the passengers.

"*Whaup* is moored not far off and supper's on the stove. As soon as I pick up my man, we'll get on board. Did you see the fellow?"

"I don't know your man," Bob replied.

"If a noisy, drunken wastrel was on the train, he's our deck-hand," said Carlyon, and ran along the platform.

After a minute or two he came back. His face was red and he frowned.

"The swine's not there! I expect he got down at the off side and steered for a dram-shop up the street. If you don't mind waiting, I'll haul him out."

Bob crossed the pier and sat down on a mooring post. It was a summer evening, but a chilly wind blew down the Clyde, and Dumbarton's dark rock loomed indistinctly in shipyard smoke and mist. Across the firth, the Helensburg lights began to twinkle in the rain; and then paddles churned, and a steamer swinging out from the pier shut off the view. Bob thought her speed remarkable, and when her smoke-plume rolled away down the firth, the black Argyll mountains cut a belt of pale yellow sky. The landscape had nothing of the distinctness that at sunset one notes in Canada. All was

blurred and subdued, and in the east the smoke of industry stained the vague horizon.

Bob saw Carlyon looking for him, and got up.

"My man's not about," said Jake. "At Port Patrick and Stranraer he made me miss the tide. When I let him go to Glasgow yesterday I was a fool. We had put the boat on the hard for a scrub, and since he did not come back when he promised, I was forced to finish the job. At daybreak we heave anchor and the brute must look for another berth."

"Your boat's a yawl, and I expect we can handle her all right."

"She's not big: thirty feet on deck. I don't want the wastrel's help; I think I wanted to put him in the Clyde. Since I shipped him at Kirkcudbright he's kept me annoyed."

Bob was puzzled. Perhaps Jake's annoyance was justified, but in Canada his good-humored carelessness was marked.

"If you left supper on the stove we ought to get on board," he said.

They pulled a small folding dinghy to the steps, and Carlyon rowed. Smoke blew across the firth and a long row of masts swung gently in the vapor. At the end of the row, Carlyon pulled alongside a yawl, and Bob jumped on deck. The canvas was furled and covered, but he saw she carried two headsails, a mainsail and a rather large mizzen. The divided sail plan was useful in hard weather, and he thought *Whaup* an able boat. Carlyon pulled the dinghy on deck and laughed.

"If the brute wants to join us he'll be forced to swim. But come on. I hope supper isn't burned."

He pushed back a hatch, and, dropping into the cabin, lighted two silver candle lamps. The cabin was painted white and broad lockers went along the sides. Above the lockers, canvas berths were hooked back against the planks. The centerboard trunk occupied the middle of the floor and supported a folding table. A pressure oil-stove throbbed behind the forecastle bulkhead and Bob smelt coffee and fried steak.

The steak and coffee were good, and Bob's appetite was keen, but by and by he began to look about. On the mahogany shelf across the bulkhead he saw, as he had thought to see, rolled charts, a nautical almanac, and a parallel rule. On the upper shelf were well-bound volumes of poetry and modern plays, and, in rather strange juxtaposition, books about cards and shooting, and a racing calendar.

Although the yacht carpenters' and painters' work was good, the little cabin was not clean. Soot stained the white beams, sticky oilskins, broken deck-shoes and frayed ropes lay about. Bob thought the disorder strange, for

in Canada Jake was fastidiously neat. When supper was over, he put up his feet on the locker cushions and pulled out his tobacco pouch.

"What about the dishes?" Bob inquired.

"Throw the things in the locker. When they're all dirty we'll clean up."

"We sail at daybreak and I'd rather clean up at moorings. You have hot water."

Carlyon shrugged. "All right. I'll fetch the kettle. You're a methodical old fellow."

They washed the dishes and Bob lighted his pipe. The boat rocked gently; one heard the ripples splash against the bows and sometimes the cable jarred. Bob was satisfied to be on board and he languidly studied his friend. The linen cover of Jake's yachting cap was greasy; his flannel trousers and deck-shoes were not altogether white. On board a small sailing boat strict cleanliness is hard, but when one handles rusty chains and muddy ropes one uses working clothes.

Carlyon was lightly built. When they climbed across the fallen trunks in the Pacific Slope woods, Bob had thought Jake alert and graceful as a deer, but now his pose was heavy and somehow he looked soft. His glance was rather dull and his mouth was slack. In fact, Bob got a hint of indulgence.

"Would you like a drink?" Jake inquired.

Bob refused politely, and the other smiled.

"Oh, well, when I'm at sea I can go without. Soberness has advantages when you navigate the Solway tides."

"You have got very English," Bob remarked.

"It is possible. You see I am English," Carlyon agreed. "As a rule, people born in Canada are aggressively North-American, but perhaps my mother's talk about the Old Country had some influence. Although my father was a good mixer, she was not; I think she knew herself an exile. Anyhow, I wanted to see the country she loved, and at length I went——"

"Was it all you expected?" Bob inquired.

"At the beginning my raw enthusiasm got some awkward shocks. My Canadian friends were kind and stanch, and sometimes I wanted to be back. I was homesick, Bob: for you and Hester and the woods. All the same, I had come over and I meant to stay. The British virtues and drawbacks are not altogether yours, but I begin to see they're mine by inheritance. In fact, it looks as if I inherited much I didn't reckon on."

"Well, you're now at Whitriggs! A Scottish shooting lodge? I suppose the house is yours?"

"Whitriggs is a Border tower; the old *peles* are scattered about southern Scotland, and for the most part are small. Whitriggs, however, was enlarged and modernized. I don't really know whether it's my uncle's or mine."

"But you surely know if you bought the house?"

"I do not. You see, Carlyon's my partner, and he, so to speak, keeps the bank and looks after my investments. Now and then we reckon up, and as a rule I get a jolt. Although Carlyon's a sportsman, he's a pretty good accountant, and I imagine we get proper value for our money. Still the money goes."

Bob knew Jake's careless extravagance, and he did not think there was much use in his remonstrating.

"Then, is sport expensive in the Old Country?"

"It certainly is not cheap," said Jake, with dry amusement. "Shooting for example! In the woods we loaded up a tent and blankets, some grub and a box of cartridges. A week's hunting cost us ten dollars, and the days were golden. We slept from the time the woods got dark until the sun was up, and I haven't got a dinner in England as good as the pork and bannocks we ate from the battered frying-pan. One felt splendid; one's eye was keen, and one's hand was steady. At a hundred yards one could stop a jumping deer. When I think about it, I smell the balsams and see the trembling cedar sprays."

He knocked out his pipe and resumed: "Well, our shooting is not like that. Four or five expensive cars carry your party to the moors. You wait behind the turf butts with two guns and sometimes a man to load for you. A platoon of beaters advances across the heath, and when the grouse come over, the flash and crackle's like machine-gun fire. If you can hold straight and pull fast, the shooting's pretty good, but in a minute or two it's done with and you move to a fresh line. Well, you're home for dinner; the house is full, and you dance and play auction bridge. Perhaps you bet on your score next day and the bag. In the morning you're dull and slack. You don't bother about breakfast; you feel you want a drink. There's our shooting. How d'you like it?"

Bob's look got thoughtful. He sprang from parsimonious and sternly utilitarian stock. Frankly, he was not attracted, but he hated to be a prig.

"When I have experimented I'll put you wise," he said. "Are you satisfied?"

"Sometimes . . . I feel I've had enough," said Carlyon, smiling. "A sort of instinctive reaction, and I steal off to sea. Wind and spray are useful antidotes; I think it's the word I want, and you, you sober old

backwoodsman, are something like that. Now perhaps you see why I wanted you to come across."

"I get some light," said Bob, and pulled out his watch. "Well, I'll take a look about, and then I guess I'll go to bed."

He went up the short ladder. The deck was wet and big drops fell, but the night was not dark. In the east the sky was stained by smoke, and behind the twinkling lights that dotted the banks of the Clyde he saw the distant glimmer of foundry and shipyard fires. In the gloom down the firth a big steamship's engines beat, and, for Bob's philosophy was utilitarian, he liked the measured throb. The Scots forged iron and built ships; for the most part, at all events, they were not the extravagant loafers Jake received at Whitriggs. Bob admitted he began to be bothered about his pal. Then the shower got heavy, and, going below, he climbed into his canvas bunk.

At daybreak he was again on deck, without his clothes, and he plunged from the bowsprit. The Clyde was colder than he had thought and not at all pellucid; moreover the tide went down the firth, but Bob's sturdy left-hand stroke carried him upstream. After a time he heard a laugh, and a slim white body shone in the gray flood.

"You're slow, backwoodsman," Carlyon gasped, and forged ahead.

Bob knew he was not slow, but he could not catch Jake, and when he climbed on board, the other was on deck. Jake, stripped, was like a statue: Bob remarked his slender symmetry and the smooth texture of his skin. At supper he had thought he got a hint of indulgence, but Jake's muscles were good.

"I have got the power and weight, but you soon had me beaten," he remarked.

Carlyon laughed. "The man who swims the Solway must swim fast! Solidity like yours is useful, but sometimes the load you carry is rather a handicap."

"My handicap was fixed when I was born. Maybe you think you go light, but you must carry yours, and by and by you'll feel the weight."

"I wonder——" said Carlyon. "But perhaps you have done with the towel, and we must get under way."

Five minutes afterward, Bob, stooping by the bitts, seized the cable. When he bent his back the chain rattled in the pipe, *Whaup* forged ahead, and he began to sing. The chain came home faster, and in the quiet gray morning "Shenandoah" rolled across the Clyde.

"She's hove short," he gasped, and jumped for the main halyards.

Mainsail and topsail went up and they hoisted the jib. Carlyon allowed the sheet to flow, and Bob, under the flapping sail, resumed his labor at the cable.

"Let her go!" he shouted. "The hook's off the ground."

Carlyon hauled the jib and let the mainsheet run. *Whaup* swung round, and, with the east wind on her quarter, started down the firth.

"Breakfast next," said Carlyon. "If you'll cook, I'll set the mizzen. I'd like to make the Cumbraes before the ebb is done."

Bob dropped through the hatch into the little forecastle. Although he glowed after his swim and his labor at the chain, the morning was keen and the heat of the blast-stove was soothing. The stove swiveled, and when it swung away from the boat's side Bob knew she listed and got more wind. The wind, however, was fair, and he cooked bacon and tomatoes and tried to make toast. Then he carried a heaped plate and a coffee jug to the cockpit.

Carlyon had set the mizzen and was braced against the tiller. The wind was fresh and angry ripples chased the boat. The tall sails slanted, and where the rail touched, the water foam leaped up. Bob saw the boat was stiff and going back to the forecastle he got his breakfast and lighted his pipe.

They were off, and although he did not know where he went, adventure called. Somehow he thought Jake would need him and he meant to be about. A keen air, carrying smells of salt and seaweed, blew down the scuttle, but in the corner by the stove the warmth was soothing and by and by Bob's pipe dropped and he was asleep.

CHAPTER III

SOLWAY WEATHER

A FRESH east wind carried *Whaup* down the firth and along the Ayrshire coast. Bob saw high, peaked islands and dim gray mountains, touched at times by misty gleams; curving sandy bays and Ailsa's rocky cone. All was vaguely beautiful and spots they passed were famous in song. When, however, they crept out of Port Patrick one morning the wind was west, and the Irish hills across the channel were sharp and blue. The Scottish rocks as yet were dark, and, outlined by a thin white streak, rolled south to the towering Mull of Galloway.

The morning was cold, and when Bob sluiced the deck his naked feet and arms were red. By and by he threw down the bucket and jumped from the wet planks to the cabin top.

"The water bites," he remarked.

"North Atlantic water," said Carlyon, letting go the tiller to beat his hands. "The flood-stream swirls round Fair Head and we follow the deep trough it has cut to the Mull. We ought to get round the point by high water, and I imagine we'll soon afterwards have all the wind we want. The barometer's dropping and the horizon's ominously sharp."

"In the meantime we'll get breakfast," said Bob, and went below.

When he lighted the stove he smiled. *Whaup's* forecastle was three feet high, and when she rolled about and the floor slanted, to cook was not an easy job. Jake was a good cook, but, except when they were in port, he had not yet prepared a meal. Although he was not consciously selfish, his habit was to take the easy line. Bob got to work and when he carried up the plates the sea sparkled in the sun and the deck had begun to dry.

The sun got hot and the light wind dropped. *Whaup* rolled, blocks clattered, ropes swung to and fro, and the boom lurched about. The tide, however, carried her south and Bob lay on the cabin top and smoked. He saw blue mountains, yellow fields, dark rocks picked out by a white band, and a shimmering silver sea. Yet for all the light and color, he thought the landscape unsubstantial. The charm of the north was elusive, but the north had charm. After a time he put up his pipe.

"Where do you keep your bos'n's stores? I don't like the spliced strop on the sheet-block. I'll make you a grommet."

Carlyon told him, but when Bob began to unwind some tarred rope he laughed.

"The strop's all right. I expect you really feel you ought not to loaf!"

"Oh, well, there's no use in cultivating laziness. Anyhow, loafing gets monotonous. Don't you feel you want an occupation?"

Carlyon's carelessness vanished and his mouth went tight. For a moment or two he was quiet, and then he said: "The trouble is, I was refused my proper job. My father was a British officer, and when the war broke out Carlyon imagined he could get me a commission, but I enlisted for a private in an infantry regiment. Pride, perhaps: I wanted to find out if I could win promotion. Well, I got the two pips and the silver cross. At the armistice I was acting captain and I wanted to stay. The O.C. was satisfied, and he was an Old Army man, but it looked as if somebody was not. . . . At all events, the Whitehall gang turned me down."

Bob imagined the War Office had some grounds for refusing, but he doubted if Jake knew, and he must not inquire.

"There's a job for you in Canada. The old man reckoned on your joining us at the yard."

"You're a good sort and your father's fine," said Carlyon quietly. "If I get bored, I might think about it, but, so far, the yard has not much attraction." He turned his head and resumed: "I feel a draught from the west. We'll hoist the big reaching jib."

For a few minutes they were occupied, and Bob wondered whether Jake's object was not to banish disturbing thoughts. When the sail was hoisted dark blue lines advanced across the water and *Whaup* began to move. Bob lighted his pipe and Carlyon lounged by the tiller.

"She's going and the breeze may carry us past the Mull," he said. "I'd like to get round before the ebb runs strong. When Luce Bay opens up you get Solway weather."

"Then Solway weather's not remarkably good?"

"I expect you have noted the heavy ground tackle and the short mast! Well, I don't haul large chain for nothing, and I like to carry sail."

Bob nodded. The anchor and cable were ponderous, and he thought the boat would carry a longer mast.

"The tide splits at the Mull," Carlyon resumed. "When the wind is across the eddies, a nasty sea gets up."

They went round the towering crag, and Carlyon steered up a wide bay.

"So far, our luck's been good, but I want to make a port by dark," he said. "There are three small harbors within reach. The wind's dropping. We'll see where she goes."

Whaup, with shaking sails, went east, and some time afterward three or four rocky islets broke the languid swell. One high pyramid was a hundred yards off, and the shining water broke in slow white swirls about its base. The tide chimed like bells in the weedy rocks, and seabirds screamed around the boat. *Whaup*, with all sail set, steered north, but she made no progress and it looked as if the tide would carry her through the risky sound.

"To hit a ledge would be awkward," Bob remarked. "Shall I shove the dinghy over and tow her ahead?"

Carlyon stood up and faced the west.

"I'd sooner keep the boat on board, and I think some wind is coming off the land. If you're keen, you might scull."

For a time Bob sweated at the heavy oar, and then he felt a chill on his wet skin. The slack sails filled, *Whaup* slanted gently, and Bob threw down the oar. She went faster, the sea was checkered by belts of rippling blue, and thin lines of foam trailed astern. The foam crept to the edge of the inclined deck, the windward shrouds got tight, and Bob heard a humming noise like a distant train.

"Perhaps we ought to haul down the big jib," he said.

Carlyon indicated the high gray rocks astern.

"When the sea gets up, the Scaurs o' Luce are awkward neighbors, and if the wind veers north I'd sooner be up the bay. A small harbor lies to leeward, but when the tide falls one cannot get in, and in a roaring breeze to wait for water has not much charm. We'll let her go as long as possible."

She went for ten minutes, and the water crept steadily up the deck. Spray beat the straining canvas and short white waves leaped across the bows. Then Carlyon pulled off his jacket and signed Bob to the helm.

"Ease her for me, I'll haul down the jib."

The need to do so was manifest. The fine-weather sail was large, and mast and bowsprit bore a dangerous strain, but Carlyon was slender and lightly built. Bob reflected that Jake knew his boat, and pushing down the helm he luffed her until the wind was nearly ahead. His business was to see the sails did not pull hard.

Carlyon let go the outhaul. The jib ought to run back along the bowsprit, but after moving a foot or two it stopped. The traveler-ring had jammed, and

Bob frowned. To throw the boat head-to-wind might shake loose the iron, but the slack sail would beat savagely and the bowsprit might go. He must try to keep the canvas *lifting*; steadied, but not fully distended, by the wind.

He shouted for Carlyon to slacken the halyard; and the jib, running down some distance, swelled like a balloon. The bowsprit jerked and bent, and Carlyon braced his legs against the mooring-bitts. The half-lowered sail buffeted him and pulled him from the timbers; the loose sheets beat his head and back like whips. If he let the halyard run, the jib would blow overboard and drive across the bows. He held on and fought the thrashing canvas, and Bob's skin got wet by sweat.

Jake would soon be exhausted and the jib would hurl him from the narrow deck. The wind was savage, and so long as the loose sail beat across the bows, Bob could not steer. To pick up Jake would be awkward; he might perhaps jibe the boat round, but he would risk the shock breaking mast and boom. He would rather the bowsprit went, and he jumped for the bows.

Whaup came head-to-wind, and for a few moments all was noise and confusion. Spars and blocks slammed and slack canvas thrashed. The traveler shook loose and Bob's weight was useful. The jib could not drag him about, and gathering its sinking folds in his arms he dropped on deck. When he got up, the sail was flat against the planks, and he pushed Carlyon.

"Back to the helm!" he gasped. "She mustn't stop in irons."

So far, he had conquered. The jib was down, but the topsail was yet aloft and to get the long yard on deck was two men's job. Bob dared not call Carlyon from the tiller; somehow he handled halyard, sheet, and tack, and threw the lowered yard against the rail. Then he stopped to get his breath, and looked about.

Spindrift streaked the small angry waves and blew across the boat. The humming noise to windward was ominously loud, and when Bob looked the other way the sea was white, as if the savage blast strewed the water with snowy down.

"Does she steer with small jib and mizzen?" he shouted.

"She steers fine," Carlyon replied.

"Then, watch out," said Bob, and jumped for the main halyards.

The high gaff swung down, and the boat lifted her rail from the sea. The mainsail blew from between the lifts and it looked as if the slack folds would go overboard, but Bob knew he must not be fastidious. To shorten canvas was all he wanted. Carlyon came to help, and for ten minutes they labored and gasped; then *Whaup*, carrying a small storm jib and her mizzen,

forged ahead smoothly, and Bob sat down in the cockpit. His clothes were wet by spray, his skin was wet by sweat, and his nails were broken.

"For a clear sky, the blow's pretty fierce," he remarked.

"Solway weather!" said Carlyon. "Now all is snug she'll face it like a duck."

"Where are you going?"

"Up the bay. I doubt if we can get into the port I'm steering for, but we'll bring up in smooth water behind a point. What about lighting the stove? I think I'd like some tea."

Bob threw Carlyon an oilskin and crawled into the forecastle. He heard the sea strike the bows and felt *Whaup* tremble, but the boat was stanch and she was not pressed by canvas. He thought Jake ought to have shortened sail before; Jake, so to speak, did not look ahead. He was careless and as a rule did not bother about a risk, but when he must face the consequences, his nerve was good.

By and by Bob carried some food and a teapot to the cockpit, and for an hour or two *Whaup*, swept by spindrift, steered up the bay. Then the white-topped seas got smaller and the land in front got high. The wind blew off the land, and when Carlyon luffed the boat near a little white village, only belts of sparkling ripples ruffled the long green swell. The anchor plunged, storm jib and mizzen sank, and Jake beat his stiff arms across his chest.

"If the wind shifts when the tide rises we'll run in behind the quay," he said. "All the same, I imagine we are snug for the night. We'll cook dinner, and then we'll loaf and smoke."

"Get to it," said Bob. "Cooking's interesting, but I have had enough. Anyhow, before I eat, I'll tie two reefs in the mainsail. Then, if we are forced, we can fight or run. I don't take chances on your weather."

Carlyon laughed. "Your habit is not to take chances, Bob. Well, I suppose to use some caution is the proper plan."

CHAPTER IV

THE ISLES OF FLEET

IN the morning heavy rain swept the bay, and streaming mist rolled across hills and moors. The surf splashed noisily along the beach, *Whaup's* shrouds hummed in the wind, and the halyards beat the mast. At noon, however, the clouds broke, and when pale sunshine touched the sea Carlyon resolved to start.

"The wind's fair, and *Whaup's* a dry boat before a following sea," he said. "If we're forced, we can run into Whithorn Harbor behind the Burrow Head, but we ought to make the loch by the Kirkcudbright Ross. I think we'll push off."

Bob was willing. He had studied the chart and calculated the Burrow Head was fifteen miles off; the Ross Island was about as far again, across the next wide bay. *Whaup* ought to make it, although the sea got bad. He went to the cable and when the chain was hove short, helped Carlyon hoist sail. To break out the big anchor was two men's job. Then Bob put on his oilskins and lighted his pipe. They were off and must trust their luck.

Whaup's double-reefed mainsail was but halfway up her mast; her storm jib and mizzen were small, but her wake foamed like a steamer's, and as the wide bay opened the sea got up. The sunshine melted, white-topped combers rolled after the plunging boat, and sometimes a hissing crest leaped on board. In front the clouds were low, and mist obscured the sea. For two or three hours that was all Bob saw, and then a big headland pierced the tossing vapor.

Spouting foam leaped up the wet, black rocks. The tide went to windward, and in the swift current swirling round the head the sea was savage. The rollers' fronts were hollow, their tops curled and broke, and foaming cascades swept across *Whaup's* rail. She plunged, and dipped her streaming jib; her stern went up and the long boom tossed. Carlyon swore and sweated at the helm, for to jibe the heavy spar across might wreck the boat. He, however, held her straight, and she forged ahead before the wind.

By and by he shouted, and Bob, seizing the mainsheet, saw on the cliff a white wall, a flagstaff, and a very small church. That was all; so far, he could not distinguish a break in the rocks, but Jake pushed down the tiller and

signed him to haul the sheet. Well, if there was a port behind the reefs they ought to take shelter.

Whaup luffed, and when the wind was on her side she felt its strength. Her deck slanted and a white turmoil swept the lower planks. Ahead, a gap opened in the cliff, and behind the rocks were cargo sheds and masts. The channel was very narrow and bordered by ragged ledges; the high swell turned the corner and rolled in long white trails across the stones. It looked as if the wind would carry the boat through the dangerous passage and into the pool, but winds that blow across high rocks are baffling.

A shower swept the channel, and in the rain all got indistinct. For a few moments the wind was lighter, and then an eddying blast struck the boat. She slanted and the water poured across the cockpit ledge. Bob heard a sharp crack, and the gaff at the head of the mainsail swung to leeward. Its inner end was not where it ought to be, against the mast, and the canvas tore from the top hoops. The iron jaws which spanned the mast had broken, and since her mainsail was disabled *Whaup* would not steer to windward. Thirty yards to leeward the surf foamed across the reefs.

"Let go the sheet!" shouted Carlyon, and jammed his back against the tiller.

Sail and boom lurched out across the boat, and *Whaup* began to swerve. She headed for the rocks, and Bob doubted if Jake could get her round in time. His face was dark with blood and the veins stood up on his forehead. She came round; the rocks closed and shut in the channel, and she plunged across the white seas that rolled beneath a towering cliff.

When Carlyon got his breath they lowered the peak and, jibing the boat round, hauled down the mainsail. The jib and mizzen drove her ahead, and Carlyon examined the broken gaff.

"Jaws gone at the neck. The job's a smith's job. If we hoisted the large mizzen and staysail she might beat back; but I doubt if I could steer her up that awkward gut."

"I know you could not," said Bob. "You ought to carry a trysail, but since you don't, we won't try to make the pool. What's your plan?"

"Look at the glass," said Carlyon, and Bob plunged into the cabin.

"Dropping!" he remarked when he came back.

Carlyon knitted his brows. "Wind's backing, and when it goes round south from west you get a nasty blow. Well, Wigtown Bay's in front, and I know a good harbor, some distance up this side, and a river mouth on the opposite shore. The trouble is, when we got there the water would not float

us in, and to wait for the next tide might be risky. If we ran for the Ross, we could bring up behind the island."

Bob looked ahead. The bay was wide and went far into the land. Straight in front, where the dim coastline ended, he saw an indistinct dark mass, the Ross Island, ten or twelve miles off. The wind was fair, but the tide went the other way, and the turmoil indicated that it went fast. *Whaup* ought to run across in about three hours.

"My notion is to let her go. In bad weather I've no use for sands and shoals."

Carlyon nodded. They hoisted the staysail and steered for the Ross, but the wind got harder and the sea got worse. The combers began to break on board, and when Bob had for some time labored at the pump Jake pulled out his watch.

"We must look for smoother water, and I expect the sands by the Isles of Fleet break the sea. The anchor ought to hold until the tide turns, and when the flood makes, we'll go up-river."

He steered up the bay. Hills loomed in the rain-clouds, and after a time three or four small rocky islands cut the dim background. Behind the rocks, wet sands rolled back, and a river channel pierced the flats. In the west an ominous yellow sunset flared and melted.

Bob thought the crescent of surf daunting, but when the centerboard was hoisted in, *Whaup* was a shallow boat, and they found a pool where the sands gave some shelter. Rounding to, they dropped anchor and when the sails were down the boat rode uneasily, rolling about and jarring her cable. By contrast with the bleak sands, the cabin was warm and hospitable. Bob cooked a first-class supper, and after their appetite was satisfied they lighted their pipes.

Wild-fowl screamed, the halyards beat the mast, and the surf throbbed like a drum. The noise bothered Bob, for he thought the wind freshened. He was willing, if forced, to fight a gale in open water; but to wait on a lee shore and then find one's way across treacherous shoals was another thing.

"I hope you know the channel, Jake!" he said by and by.

"Some time ago I went up-river to the little town, but the tide was full and I don't know the proper marks. However, as soon as the flood makes I think we'll run for the island. Suppose we land and study the ground?"

They launched the folding dinghy. Her skin was painted canvas, and when they pushed off the wind blew her like a feather across the pool. At the other side they carried her up the bank; and Bob, bracing himself against the gale, looked about. The light was going, but pale reflections touched the wet

sands, and in the west a thin moon shone between the clouds. Black hills enclosed the narrow bay, and not far off a hog-backed island broke the deepening gloom. A muddy hollow went from the end of the pool to the island, and although the channel was dry Bob imagined at half-tide the water would float the boat. All the same, he did not want to wait for three or four hours.

"Let's look at the river," he said.

They crossed a flat, along which sand blew like smoke, and, stopping at the other side, turned from the wind. The river channel curved, and in the distance two or three low rocks dotted the sand.

"In the dark we cannot get proper bearings, and we'd need a pilot to take us up," Carlyon remarked. "The island's our mark. Let's go back and walk up the gutter. We must get behind the rocks as soon as she floats."

They went back and, following the hollow to the island, saw a gleam of light. Not far off a boat was on the sands, and Bob said: "There's our pilot!"

In a few minutes they reached the boat. She was not large; Bob thought her length was sixteen feet, but she was decked forward and carried a long mast. When he stopped two men crawled from under the deck.

"Ye're from the yacht? Ye'll be for the Gatehouse?" said one.

"We broke our gaff-iron and I want to find a smith——" Carlyon stopped, for Bob touched him. "Are you going up-river?" he resumed.

"As soon as she floats," the fisherman replied. "The night's gey wild, but she'll rin up in two-three feet o' water before the tide's across the sand."

"When the centerboard is housed, my boat draws three feet six. If you'll pilot us, we'll tow yours."

"Aweel! Yon's an awkward bit where ye brought up, and ye dinna want to stop. I'm thinking two pounds is no' over much."

"Oh, shucks!" said Bob. "You are going, anyhow, and I'd 'most as soon bring the yacht into the pool where you are lying."

"Ye'll no' get a smith there," the Scot rejoined. "Then, at high water when the sea is round the rocks, I doot your anchor wadna' hold her lang, and since your gaff's gone ye cannot make sail. I alloo to moor her at the Gatehouse is worth thirty shillings."

Carlyon grumbled but agreed, and the other said: "When the tide flows we'll pull off and come on board. Ye'll have mizzen and jib a' clear for hoisting."

Bob and Carlyon went back to the channel, and Jake remarked: "I think they're strangers; the boat is not our type. Anyhow, they're greedy swine. A

pound would be a fair charge, and I hate to be bluffed."

Since Jake was generous, Bob thought his grumbling strange. He must, however, carry down the dinghy, and to row off against the wind was hard. They got on board and stowed the dinghy under the side deck. Bob pushed down a long boathook and marked the depth of water, and when they went to the cabin noted the time. To wait and hear the wind scream was dreary, and stretching his legs along the locker he went to sleep.

After some time Carlyon touched him and he jumped up. *Whaup* plunged, the cable jarred against her stem, and water splashed on deck. Bob got a light, pulled out his watch and dropped the match. When they hoisted sail their eyes must be accustomed to the gloom.

"The water's in the channel, Jake, and the tide's a new-moon tide. The surf will soon roll across the flats and we ought to be off."

They went on deck. The wind had torn the clouds, and the night was not dark. Although the pool as yet was partly sheltered by the sands, *Whaup* rolled and plunged, and short white seas broke across her bows. She would not ride much longer, and Bob, pushing down the boathook, did not touch bottom.

"The fishermen's boat has floated. They're big fellows and could pull or pole her along the edge of the bank. It looks as if they were not coming."

"They're afraid," said Carlyon savagely. "We can't stop; but I don't see the greedy swine letting thirty shillings go, and we'll wait a few minutes."

Crouching in the cockpit they listened for oars, but all they heard was the turmoil of the sea. Then Bob got up and braced his muscles.

"We must run for the island; I think we can keep the gutter. Hoist the mizzen."

He went to the bow. Water splashed across the deck, and when he stooped and seized the cable spray beat his face. *Whaup* had not a windlass, and the chain was rigid like a bar, but, gasping and sweating, he hauled in a few fathoms. Then he knew he was beaten and he loosed the storm jib.

"We must sail out the anchor!" he shouted. "Stand by!"

The small jib went up and *Whaup* forged ahead. The mizzen forced her to windward and the chain got slack. Bob furiously hauled in the links, and when they got tighter twisted a turn about the mooring-bitts. *Whaup* stopped with a shock, came round, and went ahead on the other tack. Bob, laboring with breathless haste, got in the slack, and when he felt a fresh jolt he knew the boat had torn the anchor from the ground.

After a strenuous two minutes he pulled the anchor on board, and *Whaup* started for the island. Curling surf beat the sand she followed; in front foam

rolled about vague dark rocks. Bob sounded with the boathook and shouted when he got bottom. The rocks got distinct, and by and by the water was less broken. Carlyon luffed the boat into the wind, and they dropped anchor and lowered sail. The chain ran out noisily and *Whaup* brought up. The island was now between her and the worst fury of the sea.

"Get a light and start the stove," said Carlyon. "Then I think we'll launch the dinghy and run out the kedge. Two anchors ought to hold her, and she'll dry at half-tide."

Bob went to the cabin, but when he had lighted the lamps and put the kettle on the stove, Carlyon shouted and he jumped back on deck. A small slanted sail lurched in the dark and dropped. A boat struck the yacht and a man seized her shrouds. Another leaped on board.

"It's time ye were away. Give us a rope and hoist your mizzen. We'll see tae the cable."

"Get off the deck," said Carlyon. "Tell your pal to let go."

"That's the way o't! Ye rued your promise?"

"We engaged you to pilot us up-river for the price you fixed. You undertook to come on board when your boat floated, but you did not. Had we waited, mine would have dragged her anchor and gone on the sands. Now you run no risk, you want your money."

"Just that!" agreed the fisherman. "We dinna care whether ye gang or no', but ye have got to pay." He motioned to his companion. "Come on board, Rab!"

"Rob will stop," said Bob, pushing back the fellow, and Carlyon jumped for the other.

"Into your boat!" he shouted.

The fisherman was big and truculent, but he had not reckoned on Carlyon's seizing him, and Bob saw the other did not go to help. Jake and his antagonist grappled and struck the mizzen mast. It looked as if they were going overboard, but something entangled the fisherman's foot, and Carlyon savagely flung him back. He tripped on *Whaup's* rail and plunged into his boat. Bob, catching up an oar, pushed her off, and wind and tide carried her away. Carlyon laughed, but somehow the laugh jarred Bob.

"Now we'll shove the dinghy over and drop the kedge."

Bob jumped into the dinghy. *Whaup* was behind the island, but, in a strong wind, to carry out an anchor and pull a thick rope through the water, is a rude test of strength and stubbornness. For twenty minutes Bob battled with the gale and the entangling warp, but at length he was satisfied and threw out the kedge. *Whaup* was moored, and in a few moments a savage

gust blew him alongside. He pulled up the dinghy, and, going to the cabin, smelt supper.

CHAPTER V

CARLYON'S DARK MOOD

AFTER supper Bob was glad to rest. He had satisfied a very keen appetite and admitted that he was tired; his muscles ached and his hands were bruised. *Whaup* rolled, swinging blocks rattled, and the water in her bilges noisily washed about. The advancing surf roared like a heavy train, and the wind's shrill scream swelled the turmoil. The swiveled lamps slanted across the bulkhead and flickering light and shadow played about the cabin. For a time Carlyon was quiet, but by and by he turned to Bob.

"What did you think about my throwing that fellow into his boat?"

"I thought you rash," Bob replied with a twinkle. "In fact, when he tripped over the sheet-horse I reckoned your luck was good."

"You can joke another time. I want you to be frank."

Bob looked up with some surprise. Jake's brows were knit and his mouth was tight. His curiosity was obvious and Bob tried to enlighten him.

"The fellows were afraid to row off as they agreed, and might have badly let us down; but after all, I don't think I'd have gone for the man. You might have put him overboard. . . ."

Carlyon smiled, a rather curious smile. "That is so! Well, you thought my savageness, so to speak, was not normal?"

"I thought it *excessive*, and if you want me to be frank, there's another thing. At Greenock, when your man did not arrive, you had some grounds to be annoyed, but I imagine the real trouble was you could not punish the fellow. You wanted to 'rough-house' him. In Canada you were not like that."

"I was like that in France," said Carlyon moodily. "Well, I know all I wanted to know—you saw that my control is gone. You were not cheated, Bob. It went the night I was buried by Fritz's high explosive."

Bob imagined Jake exaggerated. He had known men, shaken by the horrors of the war, who for a time had not got back their normal balance. Some indeed might never do so, but Jake's indulging his hot temper was not a remarkable idiosyncrasy, and after all he had some provocation. Anyhow, since he wanted to talk about it, Bob resolved to humor him.

"Your cabaret was blown up?"

"Our cellar. The battalion was holding a ruined village and I and some more occupied a cellar under the cabaret. Fritz's gunners got the range, and when the village crumbled we went back four or five hundred yards. I'm not going to bore you about the fight. All that's important is, to hold the old line had cost us high, and our tempers and nerves were raw. Until then, I think I was pretty philosophical, although I'd begun to hate the sergeant-major. The fellow was a brute. Perhaps you know the type?"

Bob smiled. "My lot were Western Canadians, and we did not stand for much bullying. However, I do know the type: I've heard it talk."

"That night we felt we'd had enough," Carlyon resumed. "Fritz's guns battered the village and searched for our new line. We had borne all flesh and blood could bear, and for a few hours had thought to rest, but Beswick, the sergeant-major, wasn't satisfied. The adjutant had sent for him, and I imagine he wanted a victim. Well, Norton and I and Leslie were not his favorites, and he detailed us for a fatigue. We must go back to the cellar and carry out some moldy, damaged stores, for which we knew the quartermaster had no use. There's where the thing galled: the job was a spite job.

"We went, and a shell-splinter knocked out Leslie. Norton and I made the cellar; he was my pal—a rough dog but stanch—and when we got to work he talked about Beswick as his sort do talk. I had disliked the sergeant-major, but until then I had not altogether known the brute he was, and Norton's cold, concentrated hate rather bothered me. Before he stopped I knew the hate was well-deserved.

"Fritz sent over some heavy stuff, and by and by I saw flame and tumbling bricks, and Norton's crooked face. Then all was dark and I was under a broken beam. Norton wasn't gone; when I called he didn't answer, but for a time I heard. . . . I was pinned fast by the beam, and I could not stop my ears. At length I heard water, and my feet got wet. The drainage from a shell-hole, or perhaps a blown-in-well. Yet I don't know that I bothered about the water and it did not get high. In spite of the pain and suffocation, I pictured my meeting Beswick when nobody was about. Norton was gone, but the hate I felt was his legacy.

"After a time help arrived. When the boys dragged me out I was unconscious, and I was two months in the hospital. In the meantime, Carlyon had been busy and I got my commission. I wanted to refuse, but the battalion had been badly cut up and Beswick was drafted to another lot. I couldn't find out where he was."

"Then, in order to meet the fellow, you would have stayed in the ranks?"

"I wanted to stay," said Carlyon quietly. "Norton was a first-class pal, and at length I knew all Beswick had forced him to bear. Well, I have not met the brute, but when I'm fronted by rank injustice I see the crumbling cellar and Norton's crooked mouth, and I let myself go."

Bob knitted his brows. Jake's narrative was plausible and satisfied the narrator, but Bob felt it did not account for all. Anyhow, the legacy Jake thought he had got from Norton was an awkward load.

"You mustn't allow your temper to carry you away," he said. "A habit like that gets hold of one. Brace up and fight for your freedom."

"To fight is harder than you think," Carlyon replied. "The strange thing is, in the Old Country I'm not the man I was in Canada. It looks as if my coming back developed qualities I didn't know I had. Perhaps *released* is the proper word, and the qualities were inherited. Now I think about it, my father meant me to stay at Hundred Springs."

"Perhaps you ought to have done so; but you did not *come back*. Canada's your home."

"I wonder——" said Carlyon in a thoughtful voice. "In the meantime, Whitriggs is your home as long as you are content to stay. I want you, Bob. If I do put up a fight against my queer moodiness, your part's to see me out. You're sober and stanch, as Norton was. In fact, I think my knowing he was your sort accounted for our friendship."

Bob was not going to talk about Norton, and he inquired: "What about your English relations?"

"My relations are not numerous, and when I joined Carlyon they were willing to leave me alone; Carlyon's not at all their old-fashioned type. He's an up-to-date sportsman, and when you know him you'll own his charm. His wife is rather *grande dame*, and at the beginning she daunted me. Now I know her for a useful friend. Her niece, Mary, is strangely attractive—but you'll see her before long."

Bob wondered whether Mary's attractiveness accounted for Jake's remaining in the Old Country, and for a minute or two he was quiet. The boat's erratic plunging indicated that the tide rose fast and an angry sea rolled up the bay. The rudder thumped, the cable jarred, and across the island the surf rumbled about the rocks. For all that, Bob imagined the wind was less violent.

"We have had a hard day, but somebody ought to keep anchor watch," he said. "If you like, I'll take first spell."

"Not at all," said Carlyon. "The boat is mine. If I'm tired before the tide leaves her on the ground I'll call you."

Bob agreed, and, putting his feet on the locker, leaned his back against the bulkhead and was soon asleep.

Two days afterward, *Whaup* dropped down the bay. The wind was light and she stole smoothly past curving beaches, lonely white farmsteads and high dark crags. At the corner where Ross Island commands the Solway, she met the ebb-tide running down the firth, and at the speed of two or three miles an hour stemmed the rippling current.

The afternoon was hazy and all ahead was indistinct. To port, high rocks bordered the Scottish shore, and yellow fields rolled back to broken folding hills. Bob saw the hills in long perspective, for the haze picked out the valleys and exaggerated distances. In the background, Skiddaw and the Cumberland heights were dim and blue.

Bob had seen greater mountains, but on the Pacific Slope the Olympics and the Cascades, crowned by shining snow, sharply cut the sky, and from far across the strait one can distinguish the black pine forest spread about their feet. On the Solway, outlines were elusive and color was subdued. All, so to speak, was unsubstantial, the sort of landscape one pictured in one's dreams.

In the meantime, *Whaup*, rolling gently, crept up the firth and Carlyon began to talk about the legends of hills and moors. Sometimes he used names Bob knew; mosstroopers, and stern fanatics who fought for religious freedom, royalist persecutors, Jacobites, smugglers and a famous American privateer. Well, the Old Country bred the men who blazed the Western trails, and Buccleugh, Claverhouse and Paul Jones were names to conjure by.

"You claim you're English, Jake," Bob remarked. "Why did you locate in Scotland?"

"If you are a sportsman the fashionable plan is to rent a Scottish estate," Carlyon replied. "I know English salmon rivers where the fish are more numerous, and better grouse moors than ours, but I suppose one follows the crowd. Anyhow, Mrs. Carlyon does so. People are keen to visit at a Scottish country house, and when the shooting begins ours is full."

"Then you like a crowd?"

"I don't know, Bob," said Jake, in a thoughtful voice. "I'm not a hermit, and after France I soon get bored. In the evenings I like to dance and play cards, but now and then boisterous amusement palls. For the most part, Carlyon's friends are a jolly, rather noisy lot. The strange thing is, at one time I liked them better."

"When you first arrived you were enthusiastic for all that was British?"

"You are pretty keen," said Carlyon, smiling. "Well, I suppose my uncle was my model; he's careless and I used his easy rules. Yet Mrs. Carlyon's fastidious. There's the puzzle, because I don't think she's jarred."

"Is Mrs. Carlyon a Scotswoman?"

"I think not. Her niece, however, is a Scot, and a very attractive sample. Well, you'll soon meet Mary. . . . But we don't get much ahead. Can you push out the running jib on the spinnaker boom?"

Whaup hardly stemmed the tide, and Bob boomed out the large sail. He imagined Jake had told him all he meant to tell about his relations. Bob was interested; in fact, he was intrigued. Jake was not altogether the frank, careless pal he had known. Perhaps Carlyon had molded him, and Bob speculated about the fellow. Carlyon obviously had Jake's enthusiastic confidence.

The wind got a little fresher, and the tide got slack. *Whaup* forged ahead. Pale sunshine checkered the shadows on rocks and moors; the sea was blue and streaked by dark rippling lines. Yellow sands, fringed by languid foam, broke the surface. The wet islands joined, the tide drained back, and soon it looked as if the sea were gone. Only the curving channel pierced the yellow waste. A blue haze rolled across Cumberland, and all but Skiddaw's top was lost. Then the pale gleams vanished, and the Scottish hills got dark.

Sea-fowl called across the flats, and in the distance the surf throbbed like chiming bells. The noise hardly disturbed the brooding quiet, and the wide sands were desolate. At sea Bob was not lonely, but the sea had vanished: it looked as if *Whaup* steered for a drowned land, from which for a few hours the floods had rolled back. Yet she crept ahead, and when he plunged down the boathook he got no bottom. By and by he pulled out his watch. It was seven o'clock and near low water; Scotland had faded to a blur of formless hills. Bob was not romantic, but the feeling that the country was a dream-country got stronger.

The channel curved toward the land, and after a time he saw rocks enclosing a little bay. For the most part the bay was dry, but a glimmering lane of water pierced the flats. Carlyon luffed the boat and they dropped anchor and lowered sail.

"We must wait for the tide, and I doubt if we'll get home for dinner," he remarked. "Hello, there's a boat! Mary is coming off to meet us."

Bob got the glasses. A light wind touched the water, and rippling belts indicated that the tide had begun to flow. A mile or two off a small red sail topped a bank of sand.

“I bought some cake at Greenock, but I wonder whether I’ve got a tablecloth,” Carlyon resumed. “If you’ll put the kettle on the stove and clean up a bit, I’ll look about for things.”

They were occupied in the cabin for some time, and when they went on deck a varnished dinghy was close by. A girl lowered the sail, steered alongside the yacht, and, throwing Carlyon the painter, jumped on board. Carlyon made fast the rope and presented Bob.

“Mr. Robert Seward, of Hundred Springs, British Columbia, although he’d sooner you called him Bob. Miss Mary Monica Seaton, but the title her friends give her is Queen’s Mary.”

Bob said he was delighted to meet Miss Seaton but he did not see Jake’s joke.

“Was it Mary Douglas who used her arm to bar the king’s door?” he inquired.

“It was not,” said Carlyon. “The lady’s name was Margaret. One pictures her a large and muscular heroine; but, you see, Mary’s another type.”

Bob saw she was small and light. He thought her very young, and the smile she gave him was girlishly frank, but she had a woman’s balance and calm. Her clothes were blue serge, and the color harmonized with her yellow hair and blue eyes. For all her friendly look, Bob knew she was not the girl to whom a stranger could pay a compliment.

“I am not an antiquary and my home’s in Canada, but the old-time British heroines are ours as well as yours, and I feel I ought to know. Yet I can’t locate you.”

“You are rather nice,” remarked Miss Seaton, and Carlyon hummed a tune.

“Ah,” said Bob, “at Toronto I heard a tune like that! The song was about the queen’s ladies; Mary Queen of Scots?”

“You have got it first time, partner,” said Carlyon, smiling.

Bob wondered whether he was fanciful, but he thrilled. When they crept along the coast he had felt the dim landscape’s romantic charm, and Jake’s talk had helped. Martyrs’ graves dotted the lonely moors, the valleys were the old mosstroopers’ roads to Cumberland, and the hollows in heather and granite had seen the grim Covenanters’ conventicles. All was famous in history, and now the voyage was over, to meet *Mary Seaton* was the proper climax.

Moreover, he knew she sprang from good Scottish stock: the Viking stock. Her hair was yellow, and her eyes were sea-blue. Bob admitted he was not an antiquary, but he had studied at Toronto, and Toronto is a

Scottish town. He, however, said nothing. When he did not see his line he was quiet; and Carlyon pushed back the sliding hatch.

"Tea is ready."

When they were in the cabin Mary looked about.

"The cloth is clean, but that is all. Move the tray and open the lockers."

Carlyon did so, and in two or three minutes the table was transformed. Bob knew all was where it ought to be; Mary had given the cabin a homelike touch it had not had before.

"I don't see your steward," she remarked.

"Bob is steward, and you must make allowances. He doesn't yet know his job."

"Then, where is Jim?"

"If he's not in jail, I imagine he's loafing about Greenock. You wouldn't grumble about Bob's housekeeping if you had seen the other's."

Bob saw Mary was thoughtful and he wondered whether she was disturbed.

"Oh, Jake!" she said. "I hope you did not——"

"We did not," said Carlyon, with a crooked smile. "I admit I rather wanted to put Jim in the Clyde, but perhaps he guessed, because he did not arrive. At all events the wastrel does not need your sympathy. He owes me two pounds."

He looked at Bob, and Bob played up, although he thought his doing so was plain.

"Your Scotch songs interest me. Are they genuinely old-time?"

"The sort at present popular carry their date. I imagine the others are faked, but Mary can enlighten you," Jake replied.

"The real Border ballads are not often sung," said Mary. "I think none you now hear are older than Burns. Then Lady Nairn wrote verses. . . . For all that, the airs are traditional and some were known before the Norsemen conquered the Gaels. Are you really interested, Mr. Seward?"

"His name is Bob—old Bob, for short," Carlyon remarked. "In a way, the prefix is a certificate."

"Oh, well, he is your friend," said Mary, and gave Bob a smile. "You are not a stranger; Jake has talked about you."

"I'd rather he had not. Sometimes his generous trustfulness carries him away."

Carlyon had rather rashly praised his friend, and Mary had thought to see drawbacks, but, now she studied Bob, she admitted the drawbacks were not very obvious. His look was sober; she thought he pondered and used control, and somehow she knew his sincerity.

“To draw an accurate portrait for another is hard; but, on the whole, I think Jake’s was good,” she said.

For some time they talked, and joked, and then they went on deck. The stream had got faster and the light was going. Shells and small stones struck the cable, and the tight links rang with a musical note. The shore was indistinct and broken hills dimly pierced the mist. All was quiet, but for the throbbing tide, and Bob wondered whether its turmoil was ominous. He sensed, in himself and the others, strange dynamic forces that might carry them far without their knowing where they went. Then Carlyon called him to hoist sail, and they floated up channel in the falling dark.

CHAPTER VI

BOB'S CONFEDERATE

LUNCH was over, and Mrs. Carlyon and a party had started for a tennis match. At Whitriggs one did what one liked, but as a rule one did something boisterously, and for a few hours Bob was content to loaf. Moreover he wanted to recapture and scrutinize the confused impressions he had got since he arrived.

Climbing a hill, he sat down in the grass by the edge of a larch wood and saw Whitriggs' gray walls behind dark beech-trees. One entered by the *pele* tower and a crumbling coat-of-arms surmounted the arch. The tower had battlements, the hall was high and gloomy, and crooked beams carried the roof. So far, Whitriggs was like an ancient Border fort, but most of the house was modern. Bob wondered why Jake did not pull down the tower. The grim old *pele* dominated the later building and by contrast was somehow forbidding.

At the end of the valley the hill commanded the sea and wet sands shone, and Bob saw the Cumberland mountains across the firth. When he looked the other way, swift shadows rolled across red moors, broken by outcropping granite and dark peat-hags. The larch branches tossed in the boisterous wind, but the sun was hot, and Bob, lighting his pipe, began to muse.

He was frankly tired. Jake and he arrived about ten o'clock, and after they got some food he had thought to go to bed, but it looked as if nobody at Whitriggs bothered about sleep. For an hour he danced to American music, and then played bridge. Bob was not a gambler and cards did not attract him much, but his nerve was good and as a rule his judgment was quick and sound. Perhaps he was lucky, but when he stopped he reckoned he had won ten dollars. All the same, if his hosts expected him to play cards every night he was going to rebel.

Mrs. Carlyon interested him. She was tall and thin and marked by a touch of languid dignity; when Jake said she was *grande dame* he did not exaggerate. Her look was tired but her mouth was firm, and although she was not openly commanding her guests owned her rule.

For the most part the guests were a boisterous, high-spirited lot: fashionable young women and young men who Bob imagined had not a useful occupation. They were polite, and on the whole he thought them pretty good sorts, although their careless extravagance jarred, and one or two wore the stamp of indulgence. Bob had inherited a vein of rather Puritanical austerity, but he was not going to be a prig.

All the same he was bothered about his friend. Jake used a good deal of liquor, and at the card table he played with reckless keenness. In the morning when they played billiards he was moody and erratic. Sometimes he made good strokes, but where a beginner might have scored he missed, and he bet rashly on the game. In the meantime, Bob thought he must not meddle. By and by, perhaps, when he, so to speak, knew his ground he might try persuasion.

He speculated about Jake's uncle and admitted that he had attractive qualities. For all his rather marked cultivation, Carlyon was urbane; jolly was perhaps the proper word. Bob saw the others thought him a first-class sportsman: he knew much about fishing and shooting, he played cards cleverly, and Bob had noted his skill with the billiard cue. His face was red, and although his hair was touched by white his figure was athletic and his step like a boy's. It looked as if he tried good-humoredly to control Jake, but the young fellow thought his efforts a joke.

Bob turned his head. Somebody came along a path through the wood, and after a few moments he saw it was Mary Seaton. She went to a bench by the gate and motioned to Bob to join her. Bob sat down on a beech stump opposite and wondered whether Miss Seaton had known where he was.

"You did not go to the tennis match," she said. "Don't you care about the game?"

"I'm tired," Bob replied with a twinkle. "You see, after dancing and playing cards I got about four hours' sleep, and in the morning I played billiards and tennis and studied clock golf. In Canada we imagine Old Country folk are slow, but for a backwoodsman to keep the pace you hit is difficult."

"Whitriggs is perhaps not altogether a typical British country house," Mary rejoined. "But if you are not keen about our amusements, why did you come over?"

Bob thought she did not banter him; she wanted to know. Miss Seaton was marked by a rather curious girlish frankness.

"For one thing my father thought I ought to take a holiday."

"Your *father* planned the holiday?"

"To some extent that is so. I think I'd sooner have got to work. You see, I was some time in France and at the university. I'm not a boy, and in Canada one must know one's job."

"Well, you were willing to indulge your father. Was that all?" Mary inquired.

Bob imagined she tried to lead him somewhere, and he resolved to be candid. He knew he was not rash.

"Jake urged me to come across. I felt he wanted me."

Mary nodded and gave him a thoughtful look.

"Now you have arrived, do you think you are needed?"

"I don't yet know," said Bob with some embarrassment. "The ground is awkward. . . . However, Jake ought to have an occupation. A boat is fascinating—I doubt if one could have a better toy. Shooting and fishing are pretty good sports, but to play all the time is not a man's job. Anyhow, I mustn't bore you and you'll think me a prig."

"You are sincere. You said the ground was awkward. . . . You don't approve Jake's loafing. Do you approve his friends?"

"His friends are yours."

"All are not," said Mary. "Please go on."

"Very well. My point of view is a utilitarian backwoodsman's point of view. On the whole I like your friends. Although I'm a stranger and don't use your rules, they're polite. Some are kind; I feel they want to help me out. The drawback is they're loafers—their ambition is to have a bully time. Well, I suppose they're not forced to labor. They're rich and socially important?"

Mary smiled, but a touch of color came to her skin.

"We are frankly not first-class. For the most part our guests' relations got rich in the war. The young men were in France, the girls drove ambulances and went to hospitals; perhaps they are entitled to relax. Well, I admit we're Hedonists—we do want a bully time."

"You're stanch, but I reckon Jake's lot is not altogether your lot. Anyhow, their philosophy's not yours. Well, a number of professions are now open to women——"

"To begin with, I'm not clever, and in Scotland specialized training is slow and expensive. Then my aunt is not rich."

Bob looked up with some surprise. Mrs. Carlyon at all events was extravagant. Mary smiled and resumed: "We really are not rich. Besides, I

doubt if my aunt is ambitious for me to start, for example, on a medical career."

"I think you wanted to talk about Jake," said Bob. "You imagined to put me wise about some other things would help? Well, he acknowledged me his pal!"

Mary hesitated, but after a moment or two she said: "You are rather shrewd. Jake is generous and impulsive; I agree that the people he meets at Whitriggs are not the sort he ought to cultivate. Excitement carries him away, he makes rash bets, and as a rule he loses. Sometimes I think people exploit his trustfulness. Then he has begun to indulge——"

"In Canada he left liquor alone. But does not Mr. Carlyon try to restrain his nephew?"

"Ah," said Mary, "Jake is obstinate and he hates to be controlled."

Bob got a hint of doubt and awkwardness. Miss Seaton was young, and he sympathized with her girlish embarrassment. He thought Jake was not her lover: had she loved him she would not have talked about his weaknesses; but to imply that her aunt's guests were not his proper friends had no doubt cost her something. Yet she had implied something like that and Bob agreed.

"I am not Jake's relation and I don't see my line," he said.

"He trusts you, and if you use some tact you might persuade him to go soberly. It's important that he sent for you!"

"Then, so long as Jake needs me I reckon to be about. All the same, my job's awkward and my tact is not remarkable. To have your support would be some comfort."

"I cannot openly meddle," said Mary with a blush. "But where it's possible for me to help I will."

Bob's habit was not theatrical, but he gave her his hand.

"Your word goes, Miss Seaton. I've got a bully confederate, and we're going to put the job across. Anyhow, we'll try."

"Jake has a useful friend," said Mary, and went off.

Bob was not altogether willing to let her go. Mary's charm was marked; he liked her girlish hesitation and he liked her courage. Well, Jake had attractive qualities, and since he interested Mary Seaton he was lucky.

The evening was bleak, and for some time the party danced. Bob looked for Mary, but she carried her violin to the piano, and although the music was good he was annoyed. When the others began to stop, his partner declared she must teach him a step he did not properly know. Bob thought they were conspicuous, but Miss Holroyd was not embarrassed and for a few minutes

continued his instruction. She was a fashionable young woman, and where the dance permitted gave herself frankly to Bob's rather hesitating clasp. At length the music stopped and she laughed.

"Now you will be happy! I, however, like an audience."

"Had I known the step, I might have been happier," said Bob.

"Oh, well, you make some progress, and we must try another time. Are you going to play bridge?"

Bob said he was not, and when they crossed the floor a young man, going to the card-table, turned. Mead was a big fellow with heavy shoulders and a neck like a bull's. Although his skin was dark and his look rather truculent he was coarsely handsome. He had played against Bob the evening before.

"Hello!" he said. "Don't you mean to join us? It looks as if you knew where to stop."

"I am broke," Miss Holroyd replied.

"To stop where you ought is a useful plan," said Bob.

They went on, and Miss Holroyd remarked: "I wonder whether Phil meant to be nasty. He's rather a brute."

"It's not important," said Bob, and when she steered him to a quiet corner resumed: "You really don't care about a game?"

"You heard me refuse, and I did not exaggerate. I expect Jake would finance me, but my luck is out and I don't want to let him down. Sometimes, you see, I'm scrupulous. Well, one understands in Canada it's possible to mend one's broken fortunes, and mine need repair. One ought not to boast, but perhaps I have some advantages, and if the reward were large I might cultivate the domestic virtues. Do you think I ought to emigrate?"

"Business qualities command good pay. If you went to a commercial school you might get a post."

"I don't want a post," said Miss Holroyd. "I want a rich husband. However, I suppose the competition's fierce?"

Bob did not know if she joked, and her frankness bothered him.

"You might risk the competition, but our rich men are not yet very numerous," he replied with a smile. "Then we are rather a sober lot and you might think us dull. Anyhow, the people I know in Canada are forced to labor and concentrate."

"It doesn't sound attractive. I think I'll stay in the Old Country and trust my luck. After utilitarian Canada, I expect Whitriggs and all it stands for is something fresh?"

“That is so,” Bob agreed. “I’m a backwoodsman.”

Miss Holroyd studied him coolly. “Well, I rather like the type, but it’s not Jake Carlyon’s type. He models himself on ours. Do you approve?”

“I am not Jake’s relation,” Bob replied in a quiet voice.

“You imply you’re not his guardian? Well, perhaps reserve’s the proper line and we’ll let it go. I know another who ought not to remain at Whitriggs. In some respects, Mary Seaton is your sort.”

“Do you know my sort?”

Miss Holroyd laughed. “My dear man, you’re obvious! However, I’m sorry for Queen’s Mary. Her object’s good and she’s trustful. I expect she’ll get a knock——”

She turned her head and touched Bob. The group at a table across the room had stopped playing, and Jake spread out the cards. Then he turned to Mead and smiled, but his smile was ominous: when he waited for his man at Greenock he had looked like that. Mead’s look was truculent. Mrs. Carlyon studied the scoring tablet, but Bob thought she gave Mead a warning glance. The girl opposite Jake was obviously disturbed.

A young man at the piano experimented with a dance tune and all one heard was the music. The picture was like a film picture and the players’ emotions were portrayed by dumb show. It looked as if they disputed politely about the game, but Bob got a sense of subtle antagonism and dramatic tension. So far as he knew, only he and Miss Holroyd were interested spectators.

Mrs. Carlyon nodded, and Mead shrugged as if he were forced to agree. He made a note in a little book and went off, and after a few moments Jake followed him. Bob imagined he ought to join his friend, but Miss Holroyd put her hand on his arm, and he saw Mary Seaton get up from a couch by the piano. She faced the door by which Mead had gone out. Then Carlyon carelessly crossed the floor and stopped Jake. The music drowned his remarks, but he laughed and Jake turned and went with him to the piano. Mary got her violin and she and the young man began to play.

“That’s all!” said Miss Holroyd. “In the Old Country we’re rather polite than theatrical. Perhaps you think our blood is not very red?”

“I don’t indulge my imagination,” Bob replied. “Looks as if Mead or Jake claimed a point the other thought he had not scored. When the cards were turned up they agreed.”

“Exactly!” said Miss Holroyd. “I expect you did not notice that Mrs. Carlyon signaled her husband. Carlyon’s touch is light, but he knows his

part and I dare say he knows Mead. . . . However, let's talk about something else."

Bob was willing, but when Miss Holroyd left him he pondered.

CHAPTER VII

MARY GOES SAILING

THE morning was hot, and the pool in the sands by the Waterfoot shone like glass. Sometimes for a few moments blue lines touched the dazzling surface, and the sycamores by the gate shook their broad leaves; then the light wind dropped and all was very still. From the gate short grass, yellow trefoil and purple cranesbill sloped to the gravel at high-water mark.

Jake had stopped his small car under the sycamores and occupied the running-board in the shade; Bob lay in the cranesbill. They had come down in order to dry some sails on board the yacht, but the sun was hot and Bob was content to smoke.

"You and Mead were pretty near a dispute one evening two or three days ago," he remarked. "What was the trouble?"

"A mistake, perhaps. One ought to be just."

"For all that, I reckon to be just was hard?"

Jake smiled. "Your supposition's accurate, old scout! I have not much use for Mead."

"Then, why does he visit at your house?"

"He's rather a pal of Carlyon's. Then my dislike's instinctive and perhaps not logical. Sometimes I imagine he bothers Mary, but I don't know."

"Since Miss Seaton is your guest, you feel your duty is to see she's not annoyed?"

Jake's eyes twinkled. "Perhaps that accounts for it, but as Whitriggs may be Carlyon's, I'm not certain whose guest Mary really is. For all that, she's my pal and she tries to steer me where she thinks I ought to go. So far, I doubt if my progress gives her much encouragement. However, one mustn't joke about Queen's Mary. She's very fine stuff, and I begin to doubt if she ought to be at Whitriggs. Yet I think she's fine enough to join our rowdy lot and not get hurt. Well, perhaps I've satisfied your curiosity?"

Bob said nothing. He hardly thought Jake Miss Seaton's lover, but it was possible, and he wanted to know. There was another thing: although he imagined Miss Holroyd was not fastidious she had said that Mary ought not

to stay at Whitriggs. After a minute or two Jake got up and shouted. Mary and Miss Holroyd crossed a sand-bank.

"To steal off wasn't kind," said Jake when they arrived. "If I had known you wanted to bathe I'd have brought you down in the big car."

"We thought we'd walk across the hill," Miss Holroyd replied. "Had they fixed the day's program when you started?"

"The argument about particulars was not finished, but I think they had agreed about the general plan. The picnic's at New Abbey, where Devoirgilla buried her husband's heart; then they'll visit Carlyle's haunts in Annandale and inspect his relics and some famous coursing dogs. One speculates about the grim old fellow's emotions, were it possible for him to meet the joy-riding band."

"Do they know where you went?" Mary asked.

"Ah," said Jake, "I think I see a light! Well, you had no grounds to steal off, and your aunt may inquire if you took your bathing clothes. But don't you want to see Carlyle's house and the famous hounds?"

"I'd rather go for a sail," said Mary. "The dinghy will carry one passenger."

"Then Bob's your man. He's willing and as strong as a horse. If it's needful, he'll carry the dinghy."

Bob said nothing. He wanted to go, but to invite him was Mary's part. Then a throbbing noise rolled down the valley, she turned her head, and Jake laughed.

"Mead's motorcycle!" he remarked. "The party's going. If you are not, perhaps you ought to launch your boat."

"The sail's at Gordon's cottage," said Mary. "I must see if he's about."

She and Miss Holroyd went off. The noise up the hill got louder and Jake turned to Bob.

"Aren't you going for a sail?"

"Miss Seaton did not say that she wanted me."

"You might trust your luck," Jake rejoined. "I expect Mary would sooner you went than Mead."

Bob started, and Jake shut the gate and steered his car across the road. Then he leaned back against the cushions and pulled his soft hat over his face. The motorcycle's explosive snorting stopped and a horn called. Jake did not move, but when the gate rattled violently he lifted his head.

"Hello! It's you, Phil? I thought I heard a noise."

“Unless you’re very deaf, it’s not remarkable. You heard me hit the gate,” Mead rejoined.

“Then, why did you drive fast round an awkward curve?”

“Mrs. Carlyon’s waiting. Why did you shut the gate?”

“The gate ought to be shut; when it’s open the sheep get out,” Jake replied in a careless voice. “You need not be nasty, Phil. If you let your high-power contraption go on a crooked hilly road you must take the consequences. But what d’you want?”

Mead gave him a queer fixed look, and although Jake smiled, their antagonism was evident. Then Mead said: “The picnic party is ready to start, and Mrs. Carlyon sent me for you. If you will bring Miss Holroyd, I’ll take Mary on the pillion. She’s lighter than Eva.”

“That is so, but your big machine ought to carry the other. Anyhow, I imagine Mary is going for a sail. It’s possible Bob has already launched the dinghy.”

“Then shift your car. I must try to stop them.”

Jake started the engine, but the ground was uneven and he was awkward. Before the gate was clear a minute or two had gone, and when Mead rode off Jake laughed. Not long afterward Miss Holroyd came down some steps in a dry-stone wall, and Mead reappeared, his motorcycle lurching across the grass. When he saw Miss Holroyd he got down.

“You didn’t find Bob and Mary?” Jake inquired.

“They were rowing down the channel and apparently did not hear my shout. Since the distance was hardly two hundred yards, it looks as if Seward is as deaf as you sometimes are. All the same I mustn’t stop. Will you jump up, Eva? Jake’s engine won’t start quickly. He’ll be some minutes.”

“I think I’d rather wait. I’m not keen about riding pillion over a stony road, and since you didn’t stop Mary your disappointment is rather marked. One oughtn’t to be jealous, but I’m not flattered.”

“Your luck is out, Phil,” Jake observed with a grin.

Mead jumped on his motorcycle and Miss Holroyd gave Jake a smile.

“My society will not bore you?”

“I expect you know I’m delighted,” Jake replied.

“Oh, well,” said Miss Holroyd, “I imagined you were willing to baffle Mead. But I wouldn’t be rash, Jake. He’s a spiteful brute.”

She got on board. Jake started the engine, and the car rolled up the hill.

In the meantime, Bob pulled in his oars and hoisted the dinghy's large red lugsail. Then he sat down on the floorings, his back against a thwart, and balanced himself so that he gave the boat a gentle list.

"On a fine summer day the bottom of a boat is the nicest spot I know," he said. "When you can go sailing to speed along a dusty road is very poor sport."

"I suppose it explains why you did not note Mead's signals?"

"Since you steered, you faced the other way," said Bob.

"It did not prevent my hearing," Mary remarked, and her girlish twinkle charmed Bob.

Her yachting cap and shoes were white. Her eyes and clothes were blue, and the background for her slender figure was the sparkling channel. Bob thought the picture attractive, but he must not embarrass Mary, and he looked about.

The tide was low, but they had reached the main channel along the coast. A broad wet flat, pierced by muddy gutters, rolled back to the beach; on the other side the yellow sands were high, and Bob imagined the sea was three or four miles off. Some distance ahead, the coastline curved into the land, and he saw dark rocks, outlined at the bottom by a shining streak, although he did not know if the streak were water or reflected light. A big black-backed gull followed the boat. Its shadow touched the crimson sail and its call was like a hoarse laugh. Then Bob turned and looked at Mary.

"Since Mead wanted to stop us, the queer thing is he didn't arrive before. I didn't join you for some minutes, but when I left the gate his motorcycle was not far off."

"Jake was at the gate," said Mary. "He knew I did not care about the picnic."

Bob pondered. Jake was obviously willing for him to join Mary and it looked as if he expected her to approve. Bob imagined she saw something like that, but he did not think her annoyed.

"Mead and Jake seem to jar," he said.

"One would not wish them friendly," Mary replied in a thoughtful voice. "The others are high-spirited and extravagant, but perhaps carelessness is their worst fault, and some are very kind. Mead, however, is another sort. He's cool and calculates—for all that, I've known him carried away."

Bob thought her doubting Mead was justified; moreover, Miss Holroyd had said that Philip was a brute. Bob himself had got a hint of ugly passions he thought the fellow might indulge where he dared. All the same he did not want to talk about Mead.

"Where do we go?" he inquired.

"The wind is light, but we'll try to cross the bay. There is a cove in the rocks the Jacobites and smugglers used."

"But what about lunch?"

"I have some sandwiches and a vacuum flask," Mary replied. "I thought I might get a passenger and I didn't mean to go to the picnic. Now and then banter and jokes are tiring, but the sea is quiet."

Bob nodded. "Ah, I know! At a big camp there was a *quiet-room*. You might write and read, but you mustn't talk. After the noise and strain, to be silent was a glorious change——"

He got up, for a hot wind began to blow across the sands and the boat listed. The water splashed about her bows and eddied in her wake. She made good progress and the rocks across the bay got higher.

"South!" said Mary. "A soldier's wind!"

Their course was west, and a soldier's wind is fair both ways, but Bob quoted a proverb of the sea.

"When the wind is lost, you'll find it in the south. The implication is it won't stop there long. In summer, for it to veer west is the usual thing."

For a time the dinghy forged ahead, but, when the rocks were about two miles off across the flats, the hot breeze dropped. The tide had run out and the boat floated motionless. The cliffs glimmered like a mirage above a belt of reflected light; the high ground along the shore was dimmed by yellow haze. Bob studied the flats but did not see a channel to the bay.

"The gutter is gone; Solway's sands move about," said Mary. "I hope you're not disappointed, but I can't show you the cove. We will eat the sandwiches and wait for the tide."

They got their frugal lunch and engaged in languid talk. Bob talked about the mill-house at Hundred Springs and his father and sister. He saw Mary was interested and by and by she said: "You have a home and people who love you. I wonder whether you know how lucky you are!"

"When I think about it, I do know. One perhaps takes such things for granted."

"You ought not. To be alone is dreary."

"At Whitriggs nobody is much alone," Bob rejoined.

Mary gave him a queer smile. "People come and go. Perhaps those one likes go soonest, but all are really strangers. My father and mother are long since dead, and I have no sister. Well, my aunt is kind and Carlyon indulges me. I mustn't grumble."

She stopped and Bob said nothing. He was moved, although he was satisfied Mary had not meant to move him. After all she was not yet a woman and Whitriggs was not her proper background. It looked as if she knew.

"You are like your sister," she resumed, as if she wanted to talk about something else.

"But you have not met Hester."

"Jake has her portrait," Mary replied.

Bob looked up with some surprise. He had not imagined Jake carried his sister's picture, and he wondered whether his doing so was significant. Then he saw the boat had begun to drift, and he lowered the sail.

"The tide has turned and the air's not moving," he said. "We are some way from home and perhaps I ought to row."

He pulled off his coat, and swinging with an easy stroke sent the boat along. The thud and splash were rhythmic, and he began to sing a river-song of the old *voyageurs*.

"My French is not first-class and the beat goes best with the paddle," he said by and by. "Anyhow, music helps one pull, and since my breath is gone I wonder if you'd sing about the Queen's Mary's?"

Mary blushed and humored him. Her voice was low, but the notes were fastidiously true, and Bob thought she sang with feeling.

"Last night there were four Mary's,
The night there'll be but three."

Bob slowed his stroke, and the music harmonized with the measured splash and the gurgle of water. The oars dipped and shone, and the dinghy leaped ahead. When Mary stopped Bob's eyes sparkled.

"Thank you," he said, "the song's a bully song, and one felt you recaptured the spirit of the old-time heroines: Flora Macdonald, Margaret Douglas, and Mary who was all a queen at dark Fotheringay. Well, I guess we're modern, but the stuff they sing at Whitriggs makes me tired!"

"I expect you're romantic," Mary remarked with a smile.

"Jake declares I'm slow and drearily sober," Bob rejoined. "It's possible. One likes to have something worth while to think about and something worth while to do. In the meantime, my business is to shove the boat along. I doubt if I'm much of a philosopher, but I can row."

CHAPTER VIII

AN ABLE SEAMAN

BOB stretched his back, the oars bent, and water splashed along the dinghy's planks. The sun was hot and his skin was wet, but his stroke was fast and powerful. He doubted if the calm would hold, and if an east wind sprang up it might bother them to get home. At length he felt a cool touch on the back of his neck, and, twisting his body, he looked ahead. Dark patches checkered the water and he heard a humming noise.

"Wind! From the east and pretty fresh," he said, and, shipping the oars, rolled up the bottom of the sail. "I'll tie up a reef."

The shortened sail flapped and swelled; the dinghy listed and started obliquely across the channel, close-hauled to the headwind. When she came round by the bank, Bob got on the weather gunwale, and for two or three tacks his hundred and fifty pounds of bone and muscle helped the boat to bear her sail. When she came round he slipped from his perch, and under the boom, and climbed to the other side. Some agility was needed, for were he slow the dinghy would capsize. Mary, braced against the tiller, let her go, and to see she could steer was some relief. They must drive the boat to windward, and the sea would soon get up.

Water began to splash on board. The flood-tide went east against the wind, and soon the channel was ridged and furrowed. The ridges were eight or nine inches high, but curled angrily. Some washed across the weather bow, and water gathered in the bilge. By and by, when the lee gunwale went under, Mary luffed the boat and Bob glanced at the flapping sail.

"There is not another reef, but we must shove ahead as long as possible. Keep her shaking for a few moments; I'll throw out the water."

When he dropped the bailing scoop the well was nearly dry, but ten minutes afterward the water on the floorings was some inches deep. Spray blew about the boat, she plunged savagely, and the short seas washed across her lowered gunwale.

"Is there a pool or creek to leeward for which we could run?" Bob inquired.

“Not for some miles,” said Mary. “Then we might be forced to wait two or three hours for the tide.”

Bob shook his head. The channel was half a mile across, and he thought two miles from land. At half-tide one perhaps could cross the flats, but the protecting banks would be covered and all be open sea. In fact, he must reach the pool at the Waterfoot before the sands vanished. For a time the curving bank would be a useful breakwater.

“She won’t bear her sail, but we must shove on,” he said. “Steer for the shallows. I’ve got to row.”

He lowered sail, pulled down the mast and hoisted the centerboard. All was done methodically, and when the boat was stripped and nothing was left to catch the wind, he pulled off his coat and rolled back his sleeves.

“Now we’ll try it. Keep the smoothest water.”

Getting out the oars, he braced himself for a fight. The tide went with him, but wind and sea were ahead, and he thought Mary knew their reaching shelter depended on his speed. She steered along the sand’s edge, seeking the smoothest water and avoiding eddying belts where the short waves broke. Bob knew he could trust her and his business was to row.

His face got dark with blood and the swollen veins on his forehead were distinct. To feel the cold spray beat his back was some relief, but for all his effort he did not make much progress. The wind was stronger than the tide, and where the channel curved the combers got larger and splashed on board.

“We must pull across and follow the other bank,” he gasped.

To get across was risky. In mid-channel the stream ran fast and the water foamed. Sometimes the boat was blown to leeward, and sometimes Bob, straining hard, was satisfied to hold her head to sea. He, however, reached the other side and ran her on the sand. For a few yards along the edge the water was smooth, and, dropping the oars, he got his breath.

“You cannot keep it up,” said Mary in a quiet voice. “Then we have lost some ground.”

“We’re not beaten. Since there’s no use in pulling, we’ll track her. Have you got a line?”

He looked about. The painter was short and thick, and there was not an anchor rope. Bob frowned and began to unreeve the thin mainsheet.

“It’s short. To tow her from the bank I’d need ten fathoms. Looks as if I must get overboard.”

He jumped into the water and looped the rope round his shoulders; then he pushed off the dinghy and stubbornly splashed ahead. Angry ripples beat

his legs and slowed the boat, but the bottom was firm and he made some progress. The drawback was the tide rose fast and the wind got fresher. He admitted he was tired, but he meant to hold on as long as possible.

At length, he saw the bank ahead was broken and a turmoil marked the corner. Bob, plunging into the eddies, sank to his waist; Mary shouted, and the dinghy sped past him a yard or two off. He braced his feet against the jerk, and the boat, swinging round when the line got tight, took the bottom. Bob gasped and looked about.

In front was a gap eight or nine yards across, with straight steep sides. It looked as if a steam-navvy had cut a gigantic drain, and a sandy flood went very fast up the channel.

"I doubt if I could pull across," said Bob. "Where does it go?"

"The sands are channeled by *lochs* and *lanes*. They move about and fill up. This one is fresh."

"Looks as if it went some distance and headed for the beach," said Bob. "If you don't mind, I'll go see."

He fastened the line to a lump of ballast, carried the iron up the bank and vanished across the top. For some minutes Mary waited and watched the water rise. So far she had been occupied, and although she knew the risk she was not much daunted. Somehow Bob gave her confidence, but now that he was not about she began to be afraid. When he strode down the bank her heart beat.

"We are lucky," he shouted. "For 'most a mile the creek goes nearly straight ahead, and then I saw some pools and another channel. Shove off. We're going through!"

He got on board and for a time the current swept them up the channel. Then the boat struck bottom and the ripples beat noisily along her planks. Bob threw over the lump of ballast, and when she got upright pulled out his tobacco pouch.

"We must wait for water, and I feel I'd like a smoke."

"Suppose the channel, after all, does not go through the flats?" said Mary.

"Then we'll find another; I saw water shine. As a rule, a big sand's a sort of water-shed, and the tide creeps up to the highest belt from both sides. If we can't track across through a gutter I'll carry the boat."

Mary shook the vacuum flask. "We did not use all the tea. Would you like some?"

Although Bob's mouth was parched, he waited, and Mary, pretending to drink, gave him the metal cup. Bob drained the cup and lighted the cigarette he rolled.

"Until one has been forced to hustle, one doesn't know how to loaf," he said. "Perhaps we're unconsciously just and like to feel we have earned a rest. Anyhow, until the water's deeper we can't shove on, and I admit I'm content to stop."

After the effort he had used, Mary did not think it strange. The bank was steep and dry sand blew like dust across the top, but at the bottom one did not feel the wind, and the sun was hot. By contrast with the turmoil they had faced, the calm was soothing. For all that, Mary would rather they had stopped nearer land.

"What about the people who never hustle?" she inquired.

"I reckon they miss much. Unless you do hustle and get tired you don't know loafing's delights; but unless you sometimes go slack you can't get on a lively move. Which is the proper object is another thing."

"Something depends on one's temperament. I imagine you have solved the puzzle," said Mary with a smile.

"Oh, well, to follow your bent is not a virtue, and perhaps when I was young and pliant the old man saw I took the bent he liked. Then I don't know if you ought to be made accountable for your ancestors, but to some extent you're what you are by inheritance. So long as they were all one sort you're lucky; if not, you might get a pioneer's heart and a lazy sloucher's legs. The subject's interesting."

Mary thought Bob's inheritance was good, and she liked his humorous philosophy. His muscular body was well-molded, his look was frank and steady, and his mouth was firm. From the beginning she had approved Jake's pal, and now she felt their joint adventure had somehow united them in intimate friendliness. He had trusted her to steer the boat; she had reckoned on his cleverly using his splendid strength. Then he was her confederate in an undertaking that demanded other qualities, and she was satisfied he would carry out his part.

"In the meantime you must watch the tide," she said.

"You don't play up," Bob rejoined. "Perhaps it's strange, but when I philosophize folks get bored; but I didn't expect to find you sternly practical."

"Women are practical," Mary remarked. "The word's abused, but as a rule where we calculate you are romantic. I suppose you didn't know?"

For a time they engaged in humorous banter, and then Bob pulled up his rude anchor and the tide carried them along the channel. When the water again got shallow he jumped overboard and pulled the boat across thinly covered sands to a pool that curved and vanished behind a shining bank of shells. He plowed through the water, towing the boat, and stopped by the shell bank.

In front the sand was dry, but behind the bank a shallow hollow pierced the flats. Bob knew he had reached the water-shed, and presently the stream would flow into the pool from the other side.

"We are pretty near the height of land," he said. "Before long the tide will run up the creek in front, and I reckon it's coming from the channel to the Waterfoot. Anyhow, we'll pull out. We don't want to front the sea when the banks are covered."

Throwing out mast and sail, he got the dinghy on his back, and, balancing her horizontally on his bent head and arms, he labored for a hundred yards along the hollow. His load, however, was awkward, the wind buffeted him, and the sand was soft. By and by he put down the boat, and, breathing hard, went back for the mast and sail. When he returned he hoisted the dinghy and tried to straighten his back, but the wind beat her side and he staggered. His knees bent, and in a moment or two the inverted dinghy rested on the sand. Bob's body was underneath, his arms and legs stuck out from the gunwale like the limbs of a large beetle.

Mary dropped the oars she carried and ran to the spot, but before she arrived the boat rocked, tilted and rolled over, and Bob sat in the sand. His face was very red, his breath was labored, and she saw his hand was cut.

"Are you hurt?" she asked anxiously.

"I'm mad," said Bob with a twinkle. "When you're around I hate to be beaten. Anyhow, I am beaten and must be logical. Since the wind won't let me carry her we must wait."

They were not forced to wait long. Water shone in the sand and a noisy muddy ripple flowed round a curve. In three or four minutes the water was about the boat, and when Bob had loaded the mast and sails and oars she was afloat. He carried Mary on board, and, seizing the tow-line, went ahead. Wind and tide, however, were now against him, and by and by he was forced to run the boat into the bank. When Mary gave him an anxious glance he smiled.

"Sorry," he said, "I can't make it and we've got to stop, but the water will soon reach the divide and the current will slow up. The main stream's

coming from the west, and when it fills the pool I reckon it will force the other back."

His supposition was accurate, for by and by flakes of foam and floating weed stopped for a few minutes and then began to drift east. The channel was getting wide and was furrowed by little splashing seas. Bob pushed off the dinghy, and, seizing the line, labored ahead in the shallow water. Mary, balanced on a thwart, used an oar like a pole. The stream now went with them, but they knew speed was important.

By and by the sands vanished in a rippling flood, and Bob saw across a mile of angry water a dry bank and rocks he knew. He got on board, and when he stopped rowing the boat was near the bank. His breath was gone, his back hurt, and his hands were sore, but he knew he had won. The high bank cut the wind, and the current swept the dinghy along the sand's edge to the pool at the Waterfoot.

"You have made it, skipper," he remarked.

"I?" said Mary, and resumed with a smile: "Oh, well, you see, I shipped an able seaman."

CHAPTER IX

BOB GETS ENLIGHTENMENT

NOBODY was about the little station, the afternoon was hot, and Bob, going to a bench in the shade, brushed the grass seeds from his clothes. After breakfast he had started for the moors and had lunched at the top of a lonely hill. In the heather and granite all one heard was the curlew's call, and Bob wanted a quiet day.

Lying in the shade of a broken cairn, he tried to review his impressions of Whitriggs and the Carlyons, but after smoking two or three pipes he gave it up and resumed his walk. His hosts were Jake's relations, he wanted to be just, and all he really knew was that he was puzzled.

Jake was visiting with his mother's sisters, who had called him rather urgently to their house in England three or four days since. He was, however, returning, and Bob expected to meet him at the station. The train would not arrive for some time, and when Bob had brushed off the grass seeds he looked about.

A fir wood rolled up the hill behind the red hotel a hundred yards off. In front, the line and a straight black road went up a shallow valley until folding hills cut the view. On the other side, scattered woods, cornfields and pastures melted in the Solway plain. In the distance a car trailed a smear of dust, and sometimes a shadow touched the fields. Station and hotel were quiet, and the wind in the telegraph wires hardly broke the brooding calm.

By and by a young man, coming from the hotel, crossed the line. Bob rather liked Ledsham, who was at Whitriggs when he arrived, but he had not thought to meet him at the station.

"Hello!" said the young fellow. "Do you expect Jake Carlyon?"

Bob said Jake would soon arrive, and for a moment or two the other looked thoughtful. Then he smiled.

"I believe I see a light! My train's not due; let's go to the hotel. They have a nice shady room and the beer is good."

"I think I'll wait for dinner. Besides, I imagined you had not much use for beer."

Ledsham grinned. “Since I have done with Whitriggs, I’m resuming my vulgar habits. By comparison, beer is cheap. I like it, and the sort you now get helps sobriety.”

“Then, you are going away?”

“That is so. I have got the push, and I think I can account for my getting it before Jake’s return.”

“Jake is my pal,” Bob remarked.

“He’s a first-class sort. I don’t know about his relations. Do you?”

Bob did not. He said nothing, and Ledsham looked up the valley. One could see for five or six miles, but only the clouds’ soft shadows moved across the quiet fields.

“Perhaps you’re lucky because Carlyon’s not your host,” Ledsham resumed. “At all events, you’re not a paying guest.”

“Do you imply that Carlyon receives paying guests?” Bob asked with surprise.

“I paid a useful sum for board and tuition,” said Ledsham dryly. “Carlyon undertook to cultivate my social talents and turn me out a sportsman. Anyhow, the agreement was something like that, but, of course, vaguer. In a sense, I admit the fellow’s a pretty good model.”

“My model’s an old man of another type,” said Bob. “But why in thunder did you want to be a sport?”

Ledsham pulled out his watch. “Oh, well, I have got to wait and your train is not signaled. Perhaps I was willing to indulge my mother, and I had raw ambitions. You see, Ledsham’s manufacture a useful article, and in the war the workshops were enlarged and profits went up. My father was a keen business man, but when Ledsham’s took the army contracts he saw the stuff was good. When we started the night shifts he slept at the office, although I doubt if he did sleep much. For four years all he thought about was his resolve to make a good job. Workmen joined up, coal and material got short, but Ledsham’s carried on. The strain broke the old man, and soon after the armistice was signed he died. One mustn’t boast, but after all he did his part, and we have letters from the Ordnance and Munitions. . . .

“In the meantime, I went to France and got the double stars and so forth. When the boys were demobbed I wanted to stay, but it looked as if I was not the stuff the Whitehall gang approved. You see, the small North Country manufacturers are not remarkable for polish, and the Old Army traditions are not dead. After France, I doubted if I could stick at Oxford if I got through the matric, and in order to study polite society I went to Whitriggs.”

“But what about the workshops?” Bob inquired.

"The foremen, clerks and manager were good, and Ledsham's kept going. We had thought to sell the factory, but I waited . . . and now I'm going back where I belong. Well, there's my story. I expect you're bored!"

Bob was interested, and he asked: "Why didn't Carlyon carry out his agreement?"

"I don't want to be spiteful, but perhaps you ought to know. For one thing, Mrs. Carlyon saw I was not her sort—Madame's fastidious. Then our folks are shrewd manufacturers, and I expect I inherited some businesslike qualities. At the factory I was taught to calculate, and when we played cards and bet, I weighed the risk. From my host's point of view, the drawback was that my reckoning as a rule was pretty accurate. In fact, I was not a profitable guest!"

"Then Carlyon is not content with the fee he gets?"

Ledsham smiled. "Madame's greedy, and the fellow's a gambler. I think *tinhorn* is your word."

"Tinhorn's used contemptuously. You hint you *won*."

"When I was not satisfied, I refused to plunge. Perhaps there was the real trouble," said Ledsham dryly.

Bob frowned. It looked as if Ledsham were shabbily revengeful, but he liked the fellow and doubted if he exaggerated much. In fact, Bob thought he had an object for being frank and his object was good.

"Jake, of course, does not suspect," he said.

"He does not. Jake is stanch, Carlyon is his uncle and has some qualities. . . . I doubt if you could convince your pal his relation is not all he thinks. I shouldn't like to try. His part's to supply the capital; Carlyon takes the profit."

"What about the others?"

"Two or three, whom I dare say you have spotted, are the public school, Old Army type. They're not paying guests; I reckon they're not rich. The shooting and fishing's pretty good, and after all Carlyon and Madame are thoroughbred. Then Miss Seaton's stamp is obvious. I expect Madame uses them and Mary. They're, so to speak, window dressing. The others are my lot. I don't know about the girls, but you can trust Eva Holroyd."

"How much do you know about Mead?"

"Phil's the knock-out; something like your rough-house man," said Ledsham, and got up.

A signal dropped, and in the distance a white plume of smoke sped across the fields.

"My train! I think I have put you wise, and I'm glad to go. Whitriggs is modern and noisy, but one feels the tower strikes a jarring note. The Border Scots were a grim lot, and somehow the *pele* is sinister. A sort of Macbeth's castle! Well, perhaps I'm romantic, but I can picture Madame in Lady Macbeth's part. She's the combine's driving force, and I own she daunted me."

"Oh, shucks!" said Bob, and Ledsham gave him a queer look.

"Mrs. Carlyon is not your friend, and after a time she'll try to get rid of you. If you're Jake's pal, *you won't go*. Now I must see if my luggage is on the truck."

The train rolled into the station, and when it steamed off down the valley Bob lighted his pipe. Ledsham's remarks disturbed him and on the whole supported his suspicions. Carlyon's charm was marked; Bob thought him unscrupulous, but one felt his good-humored urbanity to some extent was sincere. In fact, Bob admitted he himself was attracted. Mrs. Carlyon did not attract him. When he pictured her tired and rather haughty look and her tight, firm mouth, he half-consciously shrank. He knew her for an awkward antagonist.

Then he agreed that Whitriggs was forbidding. The old tower faced north, and the hall was dark. When one came in one felt chilled, and the wind one hardly noticed outside throbbed drearily about the thick walls. The floor was stone and the gloomy room was cold. When the hall was used on summer evenings the servants lighted a fire.

A whistle banished Bob's moody thoughts. An engine and two or three carriages rolled into a side-bay soon afterward, and smoke tossed about a bridge on the main line. The train for Glasgow stopped, and Jake Carlyon and a few country people crossed the platform. Nobody got into the compartment he and Bob occupied, and when the short train steamed off round the hill he gave Bob a cigarette.

"My aunts were kinder than I thought, but I'm glad to be back."

"For you to visit with them was their plan, I reckon? What did they want?"

Jake smiled. "You're shrewder than some people think, old scout. They wanted me to quit Whitriggs and have nothing to do with Carlyon. For a time they hoped I'd stay with them, and they'd be glad to receive you."

"After all, they ought to know their relation. You don't imply they're fools?"

"They are clever and very delightful old ladies," Jake replied in a thoughtful voice. "All the same, they're Victorian and use rules out of date

long before the war. For them to approve Carlyon would be remarkable, but so far as they could hate anybody, I think they hate his wife. Yet they could not state their grounds. I ought to be guided by people who knew men and women, and so forth. One frankly cannot argue with folks like that."

"Then, they didn't move you at all?"

"Are you annoyed because they did not?" Jake inquired.

"I admit I'm interested," Bob replied.

"You're a good pal. Still, you see, I know Carlyon, and we are modern. We have not much use for our grandmothers' code."

"Some codes stand for all time," Bob remarked. "But go on. You were resolved you would not be persuaded?"

The blood came to Jake's skin, and Bob wondered whether his aunts' arguments had not carried some weight.

"My habit is to stick to my friends. The old ladies are fine old ladies, but I was not forced to indulge their prejudices, and I did not. I don't claim they consciously exaggerated; in fact, I imagine they tried to be accurate. The trouble was, they were not logical. Anyhow, so long as I am in the Old Country, I stay with Carlyon. I have got to stay."

Bob looked up rather sharply. "How's that, Jake?"

"Oh, well, we engaged in some joint speculations and all does not go as we hoped," Jake replied with a touch of embarrassment. "Then Whitriggs and the sporting rights are expensive, and I cannot get much money; one mustn't sell sound securities when the price is low, and so forth. The thing's intricate, and I don't know much about business, but when the market goes up we expect to put all straight. In the meantime I'm not going to bother. Have you some news?"

Bob told him Ledsham was gone, but said nothing about his grounds for going. Jake obviously did not think it important, and Bob lighted a fresh cigarette and looked out of the window.

Cornfields, woods and pastures rolled by, and in the distance he saw shining sands and blue hills. The wide landscape was tranquilly beautiful, but Bob frowned. He was going back to Whitriggs, and there was no use in talking. Since Jake meant to stick to Carlyon, he must wait, but Bob hoped the fellow did not plan some entanglement for his nephew.

CHAPTER X

JAKE'S POCKET-BOOK

HEAVY rain beat Bob's window, and he heard the wind in the trees behind the house. A door rattled and boards in the passage creaked. The night was dark and stormy and the wind got fresher at full tide. Bob thought it was about two o'clock, but he had not yet gone to sleep.

When he got up from the card-table an hour or two earlier, he was rather highly strung. The game was intricate, the sums risked were large, and when the score was reckoned, to find he was not much down was some relief. Bob was not a gambler, and he frankly disliked to risk his money, but so long as he stopped at Whitriggs he meant as far as possible to observe the others' rules. He was resolved to fight for his friend; the Carlyons were Jake's antagonists and his, and he knew their cleverness. For him to appear parsimonious and priggish would give them an advantage.

All the same he meant to have nothing to do with a speculation Carlyon planned. Carlyon's statements were plausible; it really looked as if one could not lose much, and the others were keen. Carlyon bantered Bob about his caution, but he was persuaded the venture would not profit the trustful adventurers. Ledsham had talked about another speculation! Yet to refuse was hard, and the tact and firmness Bob must use cost some effort.

In the meantime, he could not go to sleep, and he tried to recapture a picture that had roused his curiosity. A group was engaged at the card-table, the game was obviously exciting, and Mrs. Carlyon and two or three more watched the players. By and by Mead looked up, and Bob imagined his glance rested on Mrs. Carlyon. So far as Bob could see, her look was bored; to imagine she signaled was ridiculous, but Bob doubted. A few moments afterward Mead put down a card, and Carlyon, across the table, shrugged.

"We're broke," he said. "Reckon up, Phil. I'll settle in the morning for myself and partner."

The party got up, and a chair rattled on the polished floor. A girl laughed; her face was turned from Bob, but the laugh jarred. Mead made some notes in a little book, and Bob hated him for his greedy satisfaction.

“My pile’s rather large and one mustn’t be shabby,” he remarked. “I’m willing to risk a turn of luck.”

A young man took Carlyon’s chair, and a girl advanced, but Miss Holroyd crossed the floor.

“Get up, Jim!” she commanded. “One likes your youthful pluck, but your judgment’s not remarkable.”

“Judgment must be cultivated, and I hardly think you are entitled to be motherly,” the young man rejoined.

“If you were very mature, you’d play a game you knew; particularly when Phil was your opponent. Besides, I think Mrs. Carlyon wants to go to bed.”

The young man got up, the others left the table, and Miss Holroyd turned to Carlyon.

“Do you think I’ve qualified for the Guides? But perhaps it’s the Scouts.”

“One good deed, at least, a day! The rule is rather stern, but perhaps you would not be satisfied.”

Miss Holroyd laughed and looked at Mead. “Careless benevolence is rash. Sometimes where you help one, you hurt another!”

Bob wanted to go to sleep, but a fresh picture got distinct. Candles flickered in a dark draughty passage, and when he took his from a table, three or four figures were in front. One stopped for a moment and went on, and Bob waited until the group went round a corner. When he advanced, a door in the old tower was open and he saw Jake in the room. Jake was putting the band round a rather bulky wallet. When he heard Bob’s step he turned and threw the wallet into a desk.

“Hello!” he said. “I won a useful sum, and Carlyon was at the bank. For a week or two I’ll be rich. Good-night!”

Bob went up the stairs to his room at the top of the house. Jake’s throwing the money into the desk was typical, but he did not want to think about it. At length his brain was getting dull.

The door rattled and a curtain in the passage flapped. Bob imagined a window had blown open, and the floor creaked. His room adjoined the top story of the tower, and when the wind screamed about the house the spot was dreary. By and by the noises got indistinct, and Bob thought he heard the gentle Chinook in the Vancouver pines.

The door jarred and swung back, and Bob’s skin was wet by sweat. Only he and Jake occupied the landing, and Jake, no doubt, was long since asleep.

In the dark the grim old tower was forbidding, and the Border cattle-thieves were a barbarous lot. . . . Then Bob heard steps and braced up. His visitor was flesh and blood, and when he was a little nearer he would jump for the fellow. After a moment or two the cautious steps stopped, and he knew Jake's voice.

"Get up quietly, Bob. Be quick!"

"What's the matter?" Bob inquired, and began to pull on his clothes.

"Somebody is in the tower, and my money's in the desk. You see, the safe's in Carlyon's room and he had gone to bed."

Bob pulled on his stockings; he would not want his boots.

"Could you not warn somebody on the lower floor?" he suggested. "Then, if the thief made his get-away, his line would be cut."

"I think not," said Jake dryly. "Don't talk. Come on!"

They stole along the passage and Bob wondered whether Jake suspected the thief belonged to his household. It, however, had nothing to do with Bob, and he concentrated on going noiselessly. He was not forced to use much caution. The rain beat the walls and the wind screamed in the battlements of the tower. The night was a proper night for a thief, but Bob felt that one could picture the spirits of the stern old Borderers revisiting the spot. After all, Ledsham had not much indulged his imagination—Whitriggs was something of a Macbeth's castle.

By and by they went down a short stair, and a faint unsteady beam touched the wall. The light flickered, as if the thief used a candle. Bob thought up-to-date burglars carried electric torches, and he, himself, would have shut the door; but perhaps it had blown back and the fellow was afraid to make a noise.

A few yards farther on he stumbled and plunged down two or three steps. He had forgotten the break at the middle of the passage. Although his fall was not noisy the light vanished, and Jake jumped for the door.

When Bob leaped into the room a beam from Jake's electric torch flashed across the dark paneling and went out. Jake swore and Bob knew he had dropped the torch. A rattle indicated that a window was open. Somebody ran for the door, and then turned and went the other way.

"Gone for the window!" Jake gasped. "Be quick!"

Bob struck a table and hurt his side, but he did not stop. The window was faintly distinguishable, and a vague black object cut the square gap. Bob plunged forward, but the clothes he touched were not a man's clothes, and he knew the figure his arms went round was a girl's. For a few moments she struggled, and then he pulled her from the ledge.

“Keep still!” he said in a breathless voice. “The window’s twenty feet from the terrace flags.”

The girl’s body went slack and a dazzling reflection searched the room. Bob held her fast, and Jake, picking up a candle, got a light and put the torch in his pocket.

“Fasten the window,” he said to Bob, and locked the door.

A number of treasury notes were scattered about the boards, and the girl clutched a wallet as if she were unconscious it was yet in her hand. She had put on a large kimono and fleecy slippers; her coiled hair, shaken by the struggle, was on her neck, and her skin was very white. She shivered and turned her head.

Bob was embarrassed and rather pitiful, but his keenest emotion was surprise. Miss Maitland was young and marked by a reserve he liked; by contrast with the freedom others used, he approved her modesty. To picture her a thief was hard. Yet she clutched Jake’s wallet and the paper money had blown about the floor. Advancing a step or two, she put the wallet on the desk.

“This is yours,” she said in a hoarse voice. “I saw you put in the notes, and I meant to steal the money.”

Jake motioned to Bob to fetch her a chair. Then he picked up the notes and leaned against the table. His look was calm, but rather humorous than stern.

“You were some time finding the wad and we disturbed you? But why did you not take it all?”

“I wanted a fixed sum. When I counted the notes the wind blew the others off the desk. I expect you think my statement ridiculous!”

Bob did not. Perhaps it was strange, but he was persuaded the girl was sincere. Jake shrugged.

“Since the money is mine, I’m entitled to inquire why you did want it. I cannot, of course, force you to enlighten me, and if you would sooner I sent for Mrs. Carlyon——”

The girl shrank as if she were afraid, and the blood came to her skin. Now the shock was going, humiliation conquered her.

“I would sooner tell you,” she said, and began to talk.

Her narrative was broken and sometimes confused, but Jake gently kept her to the proper track and she got confidence. She had some talent for drawing, and she and a friend from the art school rented a small studio. The other girl illuminated presentation addresses; Miss Maitland hoped to paint

miniature portraits. Her relations were not rich and did not approve, but they agreed to finance the experiment for a time.

Miss Maitland and the other got some commissions, but the fight was hard and frugality was a handicap. When the time stipulated was almost gone they had not made much progress, and Susan Leslie thought for them to go about and meet fashionable people would help. Somehow Susan got them an invitation to Whitriggs, and when she was called back to town Mrs. Carlyon urged Miss Maitland to remain.

Bob thought he saw Mrs. Carlyon's object. Miss Maitland was an attractive girl and her style was good. For a few moments she was quiet, and then, when Jake prompted her, she resumed awkwardly.

After concentrated effort and stern economy a reaction began. She gambled, and for a time she was fortunate. In fact, she was rather carried away; to get money was easier than she had thought, and she needed money. All she had was marked down for the rent of the studio and things like that. Her luck, however, turned, and in order to make good her loss she plunged. Soon she was altogether broke. It looked as if she must shut up the studio and go home.

"You think me plausible!" she remarked. "You doubt my story?"

"Not at all," said Jake, in a quiet voice. "You hated to own yourself beaten and give up your career? A pretty strong motive! Yet I feel it was not enough."

Miss Maitland said nothing and turned her head. The door rattled, one heard the boisterous wind, and the candle flickered. The unsteady light touched Jake's face. His head was bent and he looked thoughtfully in front. Bob knew he was rather the humiliated girl's champion than her judge. Yet she was his guest, and for her sake he sought for justice. Bob admitted he had not yet liked his friend as much.

"Well?" said Jake.

Miss Maitland fronted him, and her face got very red. "When I was disturbed about my losses and anxious to make good, I allowed somebody to lend me money. He was eager to do so, and I did not think——"

"I begin to see!" said Jake. "The fellow was not as generous as you imagined?"

"I must not pretend to be fastidious. . . . He was a very hard creditor."

Mead, thought Bob, and saw Jake's look got stern.

"Is he now at Whitriggs?"

“It is not important, and you will not know; when I borrowed from him I deserved some punishment. Well, I was afraid, and to-night, hoping I might pay the debt, I risked all I had. I lost; and when we went along the passage you were putting the notes in your wallet. I was desperate, and by and by I stole back. . . . You heard me; I dared not be caught——”

“Jake’s seeing where you went was fortunate,” Bob remarked. “When one’s rattled one doesn’t weigh things; but the window’s high.”

“Your object is good, Mr. Seward,” said Miss Maitland, and gave him a crooked smile.

Jake frowned. Bob had taken the proper line, but they knew all he thought they ought to know, and the girl’s suspense was keen.

“You meant to take the money you needed to pay your debt? Well, you had better do so,” he said, and pushed the notes across the table.

Miss Maitland looked at him as if she doubted, and her color came and went.

“Then, you are not going to punish me?”

“Certainly not,” Jake replied. “To some extent, I’m accountable, because I ought to have seen you were not urged to play. How much have you lost since you arrived at Whitriggs?”

“I cannot use your money.”

“In the circumstances, I rather think you cannot refuse. I want to know the sum.”

Miss Maitland told him, and he gave her the notes.

“Until you get richer the money’s yours, and your taking it implies no awkward liability. The only stipulation is you cut out cards. For me to urge you is perhaps humorous, but I reckon on your agreeing; and I think that’s all.”

He opened the door, but Miss Maitland’s control went. She leaned forward slackly and seized the table as if for support. For a few moments the others waited, and then Bob touched her arm.

“Brace up! To stay here is risky. You must get back to your room.”

She got up and turned to Jake. “You are very generous; I’m horribly ashamed.” Then she looked at Bob. “But for you, I’d have jumped from the window. Perhaps you ought not to have meddled!”

“Now you’re ridiculous,” Bob rejoined. “You’re going to be a famous artist, and we’ll boast that we knew you. Anyhow, you must hurry. Don’t make a noise.”

The blood came to the girl's skin and she breathed fast. Shaken by emotion, she turned her head and went to the door. The others waited, and when all was quiet Jake put out the light.

"Now we'll start, and I don't think we'll bother to go noiselessly. If somebody inquires who it is, I'll reply."

CHAPTER XI

BOB STICKS TO HIS POST

BOB, sitting on *Whaup's* cabin top, lazily rolled a cigarette. He had pulled off his coat, and his brown arms and long boots were stained by muddy sand. Jake and he had dug up and re-buried heavy stones and dragged about rusty chain. The sand advanced across the pool at the Waterfoot, and they had resolved to shift *Whaup's* moorings.

Although the job was strenuous and messy, Jake would not trust it to another, and Bob was willing to help. He liked to see Jake keen about the boat, and after they crept upstairs from the room in the tower his sleep was disturbed. When Jake called him he was glad to get up and start for the pool. They had lighted the stove and would breakfast as soon as the advancing tide lifted the boat.

Noisy ripples splashed against the planks, for although the gale had dropped, a fresh wind blew across the sands. The pool sparkled in the sun, and snowy surf beat the shoals. Yellow cornfields checkered the broken ground behind the beach; in the distance, hills and moors were cold dark blue.

The morning was fresh and bracing, but Bob pondered. The extravagance and indulgence at Whitriggs jarred, and he was anxious for his friend. Then the little drama in which he had not long since had a part had come near a tragedy.

Miss Maitland's hosts ought not to have allowed her to get entangled, and Bob doubted if they had done so altogether unconsciously. When he speculated about it, he got savage. Moreover, his business was to break Carlyon's control and set free his friend. He thought Jake had got a jolt, and now perhaps was the time to persuade him, but Jake was obstinately loyal and Bob did not see the proper argument. Then a plume of white smoke streaking a distant hillside gave him his cue.

"The express for the south! I expect Miss Maitland's on board."

"She's gone. When I got down I found a note—thanks and apologies; she knew I'd agree that she must not remain. Well, I did agree, and there was

not much use in my waiting until she got up. Besides, I rather doubted my pluck."

"But how did Miss Maitland fix it with Mrs. Carlyon?"

Jake smiled. "I don't know, Bob; but our mail arrives early, and Miss Maitland perhaps discovered she was wanted in town. I expect all was ready before she got the letters, and she gave a note to a servant and ordered the car. Mrs. Carlyon will not make awkward inquiries. The loser pays. One must not be theatrical."

"Then, so long as it's done with, you are satisfied?"

"Not at all," said Jake, in a quiet voice. "I feel shabby, Bob. In part, anyhow, Whitriggs is mine, and I imagine Carlyon could not carry on unless I helped. His wife, however, rules the house and I don't know that I'm really accountable for her guest's rashness."

"The argument is plausible, but if I had not seized Miss Maitland, I doubt if it would have carried much weight," Bob rejoined. "She gambled away in your house all she had. She was broke and desperate, and the window's high. Well, you were generous; although generosity perhaps did not cost you much, you tried to put all straight. The trouble was, you ought to have tried before."

"I didn't know, Bob."

"There's my argument; you ought to know! You're not a fool, and I expect you have some notion where your amusements lead. Anyhow, you know where they led Miss Maitland. To feel you allowed a girl's folly to be exploited cannot be comforting."

"You think she was *exploited*?"

"To find out is your business," Bob rejoined.

Jake's look got dark. "If Mead's the man, I'll see he pays, but the brute is cunning, and I have not much to go upon."

"You stated something like that before. The fact is, Mead belongs to the establishment and cannot be fired——"

"I suppose your object's good," Jake said dryly. "All the same, I don't like your line."

"Sorry," said Bob, and gave him a level glance. "I want to state I don't like my part. A prig is generally ridiculous, but the part is mine and I'm going to play up. If you're annoyed I won't bother much. Now we'll go ahead. From your point of view, you have had a pretty good time, but you're not a loafer. Your father was a Navy officer, and the folk at Whitriggs are not your sort. Why don't you quit?"

“Sometimes I feel I ought to quit,” Jake remarked in a moody voice. “The trouble is, I am a loafer and I don’t know where to go. Then Carlyon’s my uncle and a white man. I admit I like excitement, and, after Whitriggs, industrious soberness would not have much charm. Anyhow, we must not dispute. All you want is to steer me along the proper course. I expect you have a plan?”

Bob’s plan was to take Jake to Canada, but in the meantime he feared it would not work and he was annoyed and embarrassed. Carlyon had captured Jake, and so long as he could be used he would not let him go. Bob owned he had not much talent for clever persuasion, and Jake was stubborn.

“Let’s try out the boat,” he said. “She’s small, but she’s able, and I’d like to see the Scottish Highlands. Suppose we cruise about the lochs and round the Hebrides? If you’re keen about excitement, you’ll get all you want.”

Jake looked interested. “We’ll go, Bob, but I can’t start yet. Grouse shooting begins in a week and the house will be pretty full. Carlyon wants me about, and you’ll like the sport. However, we’ll push off as soon as possible. Now it’s fixed, you ought to be happy!”

Bob went below and cooked breakfast. Something was won, and he thought he knew where to stop. After breakfast they rowed ashore, and when they carried the dinghy up the beach Jake sat down in the stones.

“I must admit I’m not very bright. Now I think about it, Mary tried to warn me that Flora Maitland’s play was reckless.”

“The proper line was to warn Mrs. Carlyon,” Bob remarked meaningly. “Do you imagine Mary did so?”

Jake gave him a queer look. “You’re a stubborn fellow, Bob. Sometimes Mrs. Carlyon is careless. For example, I have thought Mary attracted Mead.”

“Miss Maitland implied *she* attracted Mead.”

“It’s possible! The brute’s amorous.”

Bob’s face got red, and although he knew Jake studied him, he clenched his fist.

“You cannot meddle. The job is mine,” Jake resumed quietly.

“Then, why don’t you get to it? Miss Seaton ought not to stay at Whitriggs.”

“On the whole, I agree,” said Jake, in a quiet voice. “All the same, her aunt is her proper guardian, and I imagine she has nowhere to go. Anyhow, Mead is not going to bother her—but we must get off.”

They put the dinghy in a shady spot and got on board the car. When they arrived at Whitriggs Jake and some others started for a moorland loch, and in the afternoon Bob carried a book to the garden. A big purple beech spread its branches across a nook cut in a thick hedge, and Bob sat down on a bench. The leaves fluttered, trembling shadows touched the grass, and the wind in the branches was like the distant turmoil of the tide. Bob did not know if he put down the book, but when he heard a light step the book was on the bench and his pipe was out. He looked up, and Mary Seaton stopped and smiled.

"Until I reached the corner, I did not know you were about," she said, as if she apologized. "You and Jake, however, were away at seven o'clock."

"I expect that explains my nodding, but since you have arrived, I hope you'll stay."

Mary sat down. For a moment she said nothing, but Bob imagined she had noticed that he was willing to account for his sleepiness. Then she said: "Perhaps you know why Flora Maitland went away?"

Bob started. Mary was young, but sometimes he did not know when she was a girl and when a woman.

"I'd sooner you inquired from Jake," he said.

"Oh, well, I ought not to have bothered you," said Mary, and her smile hinted that she approved his reserve. "Then I rather think I *know*."

Bob doubted, but she resumed: "After all had gone to bed I heard a noise."

"It's possible; I was in the tower."

"Yes; I know," said Mary. "Jake ought to have warned you about the steps in the passage!"

Bob colored. Mary's keenness was embarrassing. Since she had heard Jake and him, he imagined she had heard another.

"Well," she continued, "I am glad Flora is gone. She ought to have gone before. Yet, you see, I dared not meddle. Perhaps you have felt you might put something straight, but in the circumstances you must not?"

"As a rule, I try, and make a worse entanglement," said Bob. "One needs a light touch and mine is clumsy."

"A girl must weigh things where a man need not," Mary remarked. "Then, so long as you mean to help and you're not daunted, perhaps a little awkwardness is not important. At times your efforts carry you farther than you have much grounds to think."

On the surface, Bob thought her philosophy girlishly naïve; but although Mary was like that she was not a fool. He felt her remarks were not careless. There, so to speak, was a sequence, and she led him somewhere. He said nothing, and Mary went on:

"You and Jake are going for a cruise, and I think you ought to start. In the north the days soon get short, and to navigate among the islands you need fine weather. But when the cruise is over you must come back with Jake."

"I will come back," said Bob.

Mary got up and gave him a smile.

"Your word goes," she said, and went off.

Bob thrilled. Mary trusted him and wanted him about. Since she knew Jake and he were in the tower, and she admitted she knew something about Miss Maitland's going, her trust was flattering. Yet had she loved Jake, he thought for her not to be jealous was hardly human. The argument was not altogether satisfactory.

After a time Miss Holroyd crossed the grass. Bob wondered whether she knew something and wanted to indulge her curiosity, and he frowned. When she joined him she laughed.

"Since you choose a nice shady spot, you mustn't grumble if you're disturbed."

"I have not yet grumbled, and I don't expect to do so," Bob rejoined.

Miss Holroyd sat down. "Jake talks about a cruise. I suppose the plan was yours?"

"Perhaps I thought about it first, but Jake wants to go."

"And Mary agrees?"

Bob nodded, for he liked Eva Holroyd and knew he could not baffle her.

"Mary's a useful friend," she resumed. "Then, although Jake has some drawbacks, he's a good sort and rather rich. I don't see why Mary did not marry him. I think I'd have risked it."

"Do you imply that Miss Seaton refused?"

"Not at all. I doubt if Jake thought about it; but perhaps you know a young man can be led. Well, Mrs. Carlyon tried, but she did not get her niece's support, and now I imagine Mary is rather in disgrace. Mary's a dear. When you contrast her with her background, you see her fineness. She shines in dark places. Don't you think I'm generous?"

"Is it not possible for a young man and an attractive girl to be friends and not think about marriage?" Bob inquired.

“It’s possible for Mary,” Miss Holroyd replied with a smile. “I might state another example—for all your soberness, you have some attractive qualities, and I know mine. Yet I would not marry you, Mr. Seward. Anyhow, I like you, and I want to help. You see, I doubt if Mrs. Carlyon will allow you to carry Jake off.”

Bob did not try to play up. He had begun to know Miss Holroyd, and he did not think she wanted him to joke.

“Do you see her line?” he asked soberly.

“A large shooting party will soon arrive and you have stayed some time. In the circumstances, she might risk your thinking her inhospitable. Somebody fresh might want your room!”

Bob knitted his brows. Ledsham had reckoned on Mrs. Carlyon’s trying to get rid of him.

“If I’m asked to go, I cannot stay.”

“Jake will not ask you; there’s your advantage. You must say that you cannot embarrass your hosts, but you are keen about the shooting and you will stop in the neighborhood. The inn two miles off is good, and Gordon at the Waterfoot would take a boarder. Try my plan and see how it works.”

“Thank you,” said Bob. “I think I’ll do so.”

Miss Holroyd got up. “You have a fresh confederate, and although one mustn’t boast, I think we are a strong combine. Well, I expect your book is interesting. . . .”

She went off, but Bob pondered and left the book alone.

In the morning Mrs. Carlyon joined him on the terrace. Although the post had arrived some time since, she carried three or four letters. Jake had gone off with a party and would not be back until dinner, and nobody was about. Mrs. Carlyon’s look was apologetic and she twisted an open letter as if it annoyed her.

“To arrange for a big shooting party is awkward, and our rooms are not numerous,” she remarked. “People do not stick to their engagements, and some old friends of my husband’s, after fixing to join us later, now inform me they will arrive to-night. We expect three or four more to-morrow, and soon the house will be crowded. For the most part, they’re rather boisterous young people, and I doubt if you would care for their society.”

To smile cost Bob something, but he did smile. He hated to stay, but he had promised to do so, and Ledsham, Mary and Miss Holroyd thought he ought. Well, he would make the experiment Miss Holroyd suggested.

“You must not put off Mr. Carlyon’s friends, ma’am. For some time I’ve enjoyed your kindness, and now of course you must use my room.”

Mrs. Carlyon’s satisfaction was obvious; in fact Bob imagined she was willing for it to be observed. Yet he thought her puzzled; perhaps she had expected a touch of annoyance. Moreover, Jake’s having gone off for the day was important.

“I feel horribly shabby, but you do help me out,” she said. “A train goes to Carlisle at twelve o’clock, and you could get to Edinburgh for dinner. I think you have not yet seen the city, and before you leave Scotland you ought to make a tour of the Highlands. If you like, I will order the car.”

In a sense, Bob thought her anxiety to get rid of him humorous. All the same, her risking Jake’s annoyance was significant, and he knew if he went she would see he stayed for good.

“I should like the car, ma’am, but I’m not going to the station,” he replied. “I don’t know much about British sports, but I can use a gun, and Jake expects me to remain for the grouse shooting. For a week or two I’ll stay at the inn.”

Mrs. Carlyon’s eyelids flickered, and her thin mouth got a little straighter. That was all, but Bob knew she hated him because he baffled her.

“Oh, no!” she said. “If I agreed, Jake would be angry, and my husband would not be pleased. Besides, I should not like to feel I had persuaded you to leave. Since you mean to join the shooting, you must stay, and I will telegraph to our other friends.”

Bob did not want to stay, but Miss Holroyd’s plan had worked and he saw a light. Had he indulged his annoyance and gone off, Mrs. Carlyon might have satisfied Jake; but when he was at the inn she could not. On the whole, he thought her resolve to push him out ominous.

“You are kind, ma’am,” he said awkwardly. “I’m afraid I bother you.”

“A large party does bother one, but I imagine a telegram will put all straight,” Mrs. Carlyon replied politely, and left Bob alone.

CHAPTER XII

AN AWKWARD SHOT

MIST drifted about the grouse butts on the dreary moor. For the most part, the turf mounds were built at even distances, but in order to avoid a bog two were spaced a little closer on outcropping granite. Bob and Jake each occupied a mound, Mead and his loader the next, at less than the usual distance. The morning was bleak, slanted rain blew across the butts, and Bob's clothes were wet. Jake grumbled and used his flask.

Bob did not know much about grouse shooting, but he knew Jake was annoyed. The beaters had apparently not started where they ought, and when the sportsmen reached the butts a searching wind sprang up and mist rolled down the hill. Four or five hundred yards off stones and heather melted in the haze.

After a time small dark objects cut the sky. The grouse were flying down-wind and went very fast. Pushed on by the beaters they advanced in scattered groups and soon got distinct.

At the end of the row a gun cracked, and a bird tossed in the air and plunged. Thin smoke blew about the next butt, and then the reports rolled along the line like rapid hammering. Bob saw the grouse that escaped would cross his butt and he balanced his gun. In a moment or two he must shoot quick and straight.

A gun exploded not far off; two grouse struck the ground and small feathers floated about. Bob saw Mead a few yards from the bank of turf. The grouse swerved and crossed Bob's butt obliquely some distance off. Bob shot, and, swinging his gun, pulled the other trigger; he heard Jake's gun and a grouse dropped. That was all; the shot was long.

Jake threw his gun against the sods. His face was red and he started for Mead's butt. The other advanced to meet him and they began to dispute. It looked as if Mead had not used rules planned to guard the shooters and fairly divide the sport. Bob did not know much about it, but he saw Jake was savage and he went after him.

When Bob joined the others, Jake's mouth was tight and his eyes sparkled. Mead's heavy brows were knit and his look was sullen. Bob did

not think the grounds for the dispute very important; rather it was the spark that fired the men's antagonism.

"There is no use in talking," said Jake. "The shot was dangerous, and you ought to have kept your station. You can judge distance, and if you cannot, Macfarlane warned you the butts were rather near. When you came out from the bank your shot was a raking shot and you might have peppered Bob. Another time you'll stay where you're put."

"Since you're fastidious, you ought to see the butts are properly spaced," Mead rejoined.

"The butts were built for sportsmen. We don't allow for greediness," said Jake, and, fixing his eyes on the other, resumed: "You want all, but all you want at Whitriggs will not be yours. I expect you understand? Anyhow, you're warned."

He beckoned Bob, and they went to meet the shooters who had left the butts. The beaters, indistinct in the mist, straggled down the long slope, and the party plowed across the tangled heather to the next shooting station.

After an hour or two they stopped in the shelter of a ruined building by an old quarry. A car had arrived with two or three young women and the lunch basket, and a generous supply of liquor, which soon vanished. The afternoon was bleak, and the party was cold and wet. Nobody was satisfied with the morning's sport, and the gamekeeper was apologetic: the mist had spoiled his plans.

Bob sat down on a stone in the shelter of the broken wall, and by and by Miss Holroyd brought him some cold pie and sandwiches. Her mackintosh was dark with rain and the drops from her oilskin cap shone in her hair.

"How do you like grouse shooting?" she inquired.

"The sport is pretty good; you must shoot straight and shoot fast. In Canada we talk about *hunting*, and we do hunt. Before you shoot you must trail your deer, and if you get a mule-tail after a long day's hike you are satisfied. In the Old Country the beaters find the grouse, and when the drive is properly planned I expect you get something like wholesale slaughter. From my point of view, trailing is better sport than killing, but I don't imagine you're remarkably interested."

Miss Holroyd laughed. "Since I'm partly responsible for your shooting, I felt I ought to inquire. I like to be polite, although you have not recently given me much of your confidence."

"Your plan worked. I hated to remain, but one tries to stay with one's job. Well, Mrs. Carlyon found out some guests were arriving sooner than she

had expected. In the circumstances, I said she must use my room and I'd go to the inn. She declared she would rather put off her friends by a telegram."

"Mrs. Carlyon is thorough: she did telegraph. She sent a servant to the post-office when Mary and I were about. I expect you see her argument? So long as you were at the inn, she risked Jake's demanding to know why you left his house. Had you, however, gone off by the next train, she might have calculated on your being hurt and angry and saying nothing."

"It's plausible. You know Mrs. Carlyon; do you feel you're just?"

"I don't think you doubt, but we'll let it go," Miss Holroyd rejoined with a smile. "Jake's temper is not serene and I think politeness costs him something. He and Mead disputed, did they not? Perhaps you can tell me what it was about?"

"Mead came out from behind his butt, and knocked down a bird Jake thought was ours. In a way, they had not much grounds for getting mad, but Jake was savage and Mead's look was ugly. Since they hate each other, I wonder why the fellow stays."

"It looks strange," Miss Holroyd agreed, and got up. "At all events, Jake is queer, and perhaps you ought not to leave him alone. Sometimes he must be humored and soberness like yours is soothing."

"I wonder. . . . Anyhow, I begin to see why you inquired if I liked the sport."

"Oh, well, that is something!" said Miss Holroyd, and went off.

Soon afterward Mary called Bob.

"In a few minutes we are going back and I wanted Jake to go with us," she said. "I think he's not very well and his clothes are wet; since he was in France he's sometimes queer. But I cannot persuade him."

Bob saw her apology was labored. He himself imagined the liquor Jake had used accounted for something.

"Then, if *you* can't move him, I'm afraid he must stay."

Mary hesitated. A touch of color came to her skin, and Bob wondered how much she knew. Mary was fastidious and sometimes rather girlish, but she was shrewd.

"Oh, well," she said, "you might perhaps see he does not stand in the rain, and get him to stop the shooting as soon as the sport is poor. Once or twice after a bleak day on the moors he was forced to go to bed. If you use some tact, perhaps he will be careful——"

"Come on! The car's going!" Carlyon shouted. "All who have had enough had better get on board. If we must push through the bogs until it's

dark, we are going to make a bag."

The big car, awkwardly crowded, lurched away down the quarry track. Carlyon called the gamekeeper, and when they began to talk Bob lighted a cigarette. He recaptured Mary's thoughtful look, her slender girlish figure, and the rosy flush the rain brought to her skin. Miss Holroyd was another type, but she, like Mary, was disturbed about Jake. Although Bob thought he was neither's lover, they were anxious for him. In a way, the thing was strange. Jake was reckless, unstable, and sometimes moody, yet he attracted women and worked unconsciously on their protective instincts; perhaps "maternal" was the proper word. Bob did not altogether see where his charm was, but Jake had charm. The others, however, were starting, and he got up.

For three or four hours they tramped about the wet heath and waited behind turf banks and broken walls. Sometimes speeding grouse broke from the mist and for a few moments the guns were busy, but the birds were not numerous and the light was puzzling. At length, when they sheltered behind some peat stacks, Macfarlane, the gamekeeper, advanced across the bog.

"All we have seen is a curlew," said Carlyon. "Where are your beaters?"

"I dinna ken," the gamekeeper replied. "They're an independent, feckless lot o' wastrels. I'm thinking some are lost and the ithers are away home."

"Then we'll let them go. The mist is thicker and the rain gets hard."

"The bag's small," Jake objected. "We might get a few wild-duck by the Lady burn, but it means a two- or three-mile walk." He turned to the others. "The ground's boggy, and if you're not keen, you can steer for the farm where the cars will wait. Macfarlane will show you the way."

The party broke up and some followed the gamekeeper. Carlyon, Bob, and a few more went with Jake, and after a time he stopped at the top of a shallow valley.

"Spread out and take your own line," he said. "You may get a long shot at a grouse, and you ought to find some widgeon about the loch."

They scattered and Jake pushed ahead through the long heather. Bob was a hundred yards off, and Carlyon a short distance farther; two more took the bottom of the hill. Mead and one or two crossed the hollow, and their figures presently melted into the background.

Once or twice a gun cracked in the mist, but the grouse went another way and all Bob saw was a flock of draggled sheep. The rain beat his mackintosh and the dripping heather twined about his leggings. He was not keen to shoot; he wanted to reach the farm where the cars would meet the

party. Mead and his lot had vanished, but the curving hillside forced the others nearer Bob, and at length they met by a wood.

The thin birches and battered firs went round a small loch. The ragged branches tossed, and across the lead-colored waves long reeds rolled in the wind. In the background, white wild cotton dotted a dark bog. The sport was dreary and the light began to go.

When the party went down to the water, a dry-stone wall cut their view. Jake stopped behind the wall and turned to the others.

"Looks as if Mead's lot had kept the high ground, and we ought to get a duck. One can see the reed beds from the wall, and if you'll wait for a minute or two I'll climb up."

The wall was six feet high and built with sharp loose stones. Jake seized the top, and, pushing his foot into a hole, hoisted his body until he could look across. Bob leaned against a granite block, and the others were scattered about at uneven distances. Now they had come down the hill the wall hid the loch, and except for the splash of water all was quiet. Then wings beat noisily.

"Mallard! Coming over low," said Jake, and felt for a firm stone, as if he meant to jump back.

Across the wall three or four large dark objects pierced the mist. Bob saw long necks and short wings, but the ducks flew uphill obliquely, and the shot was not his. Jake turned his head, and two or three guns exploded. A duck turned over and dropped, and then stones crashed and Jake plunged from the wall. A stone fell on him, but in a moment he was on his feet. Running savagely along the bottom of the wall, he stumbled and went down in the heather.

Bob jumped for the spot and moved Jake until he could rest his back against the stones. Blood smeared his forehead, his color had vanished and his eyes were shut.

"Did the stone fall on your head?" Bob gasped.

"I was shot," said Jake. "I think I'm blind!"

Bob looked round. The others had run up, and he said to one:

"Get water—as clean as possible!"

After a minute or two the young fellow came back carrying water in his inverted shooting-cap. Bob gently washed the blood from Jake's face, and saw three or four small black bulges on his forehead. Two more were under the eyebrow not far from the lid. The lid was not marked, but Bob thought Jake had run some risk, although the blood for the most part was from the cut where the stone had struck. The shot was plainly a glancing shot fired

from some distance, and the bone had stopped the pellets. Bob pulled out his knife.

"Let your head go back," he said. "Now, don't move! I'm not going to hurt you much."

Using the small knife's fine point, he picked out the shot. The two under the brow were rather deep, and Jake set his mouth, but Bob was quick and cool. In a few moments the pellets were in his hand and Jake opened his eyes.

"I *can see*!" he gasped and awkwardly got up. "Let me go, Bob. The fellow who shot me is behind the wall."

"Stop him!" shouted Carlyon, and, when Bob seized Jake, ran for the gap where the stones had fallen and climbed across.

Jake tried to follow, but Bob held fast, and, forcing him to sit down, went to the gap. Behind the wall was a bank of gravel washed down a burn by winter storms; and then small birches and mountain ashes dotted the slope to the loch. Carlyon went slowly down the hill as if he looked for footmarks. When he saw Bob he smiled and returned to the broken spot.

"Nobody is about," he said.

A young man shouted, but all was quiet and Bob went back to Jake. Jake sat quietly at the bottom of the wall. His pose was rather slack, his skin was white and the cut had begun to bleed.

"I reckon I'd better tie you up," said Bob. "Has somebody a flask?"

He got a flask, and, putting some spirit on the wet handkerchief he had used, fixed the bandage. Then he gave Jake the metal cup.

"Now you can take a drink."

Jake drained the cup and turned to Carlyon.

"You found nothing?"

"I think nobody was there, Jake. The stones by the burn would not carry marks, but so far as I could see nobody had crossed the boggy peat."

"It looks as if one of us shot you," a young man remarked. "The ducks were flying low and you were on top of the wall. It's possible the shot was mine, and if you have suffered from my carelessness I am sorry."

"You're a sport," said Jake. "All the same the shot wasn't yours. If you had hit me at twenty yards you'd have made a better job. Number five pellets hit pretty hard, and I'm convinced the shot glanced off the stones. That implies it was fired behind the wall, and I had a notion I heard somebody. I, however, concentrated on the Mallard."

The others generously disputed his statement, and were willing to acknowledge themselves to blame. They had got two ducks, and three had used their guns. Two were some distance from the wall, and at thirty or forty yards, shot scatters. A few pellets might have struck Jake.

Bob saw Jake was not satisfied, and he himself was puzzled. The three shots were almost simultaneous, but now he thought about it he wondered whether he had not heard another, a moment after Jake began to slip from the wall. If it were so, Jake's getting hit did not account for his plunge. He was hit when his head was near the top of the stones. However, Bob did not know.

"You mustn't get cold, Jake," said Carlyon. "I expect you can use your legs?"

"Of course," said Jake, and got up. "I thought I was blind. Perhaps fright really knocked me out."

"Then, I'll push on across the hill and send the car as far as possible up the moor track," said Carlyon, and climbed the wall.

CHAPTER XIII

JAKE'S ILLUSION

FOR two or three days after the shooting accident, Jake kept his room. His injuries were not important, but when he was hit he was cold and tired. The country doctor talked about the consequences of the shock, and ordered quietness, but Bob was allowed to see Jake, and one evening he joined him in the room he sometimes occupied in the tower.

Jake was on a couch by the fireplace. He had pulled off his bandage and only a small cut and a few red spots indicated where he was hurt, but Bob knew him nervously irritable. The fireplace went back into the thick wall like a cave, for in the old days the first floor was the Border laird's living-room.

At Whitriggs calm evenings were not numerous, but the wind had dropped and the window was pushed back. An owl hooted by the shadowy trees, and in the distance the surf throbbed like a train; the tide was half-flood and advanced across the sands as fast as a man could walk. After a time Bob shivered. The tower was damp and chilly; old paneling and oak beams cracked and one heard puzzling noises. A large modern oil-lamp burned on the table, but Bob got up and threw a fresh log in the grate.

"The old room's dreary—I think I mean 'forbidding,' " he remarked. "I don't know that I'm romantic, but I'd like to shift you to a more cheerful spot."

"You're not remarkably romantic," Jake agreed. "All the same, you're a pretty good scout, and you went to the loch. Well?"

"I went in order to put your mind at rest. So far as I could see, nobody was on the other side of the wall. Anyhow, only Carlyon's footsteps, going and coming back, marked the boggy turf."

"The stones by the burn go down to the loch, and for some distance the beach is gravel. Stones don't carry marks."

"If somebody followed the stones, he must have crossed three or four small pools."

"Exactly!" Jake agreed. "He wouldn't take the water, unless he had first-class grounds not to leave his tracks."

"Oh, shucks!" Bob rejoined. "There's another thing. If the shot, as you claim, was a glancing shot, you'd expect me to find where the lead hit the stone? Well, I did not."

"You are a skeptical old fellow. Since you were able to pick out the shot, I'm satisfied it did hit the stones."

Bob said nothing. He saw he could not convince Jake, and he reviewed all he could remember about the accident. Jake was not on top of the wall, although he looked over and his head was distinct against the sky. The others were good shots, but the ducks flew across obliquely, and sometimes when one shoots at a crossing bird one swings, following the mark with the gun. It might account for the shooter's not seeing Jake.

Yet Jake contended the shot came from the other side. Modern sporting gunpowder is nearly, but not altogether, smokeless, and now Bob concentrated, he wondered whether he had not half-consciously noticed a very faint blue streak of vapor floating across the wall. Frankly, he did not know. On the whole, he thought Jake's firm conviction had much to do with it.

Moreover, he had talked to Mead's party. The men were tired and the low ground by the loch was boggy. They resolved they would not bother about the ducks, and each kept his line across the slope to the water. Small birches dotted the slope, and the mist was thick. Nobody knew where the others were, but when they reached the farm Mead was waiting. Besides, the party had gone fast. Jake and Mead had not long since engaged in an angry dispute, but to imagine the fellow had tried to shoot Jake was ridiculous. In fact, Jake had obviously allowed his dislike to carry him away.

"Let it go," he said. "Mead was not at the loch. There's no use in dwelling on the thing."

"Your philosophy is sound," Jake remarked with a dry smile. "Well, if we do much shooting with the lot now at Whitriggs, it looks as if you ought to get insured. I went to a good office, but they asked too much——"

"You tried to take out a policy? Who suggested it?"

"*Carlyon* did not. Although I expect he's my heir, he reckoned it a joke. A lawyer who stopped with us thought I ought—a young man pays a small premium, I might marry, and so forth! Well, I saw the company's doctor, and it looks as if his report was not good and I'm not the man I was before I went to France. Sometimes I feel dicky and I'm bothered by bad headaches; but I mustn't bore you with particulars."

"Then, Carlyon is your heir?"

"He's my nearest male relation, and if I were knocked out, I imagine he would get my property; but I don't know much about it. I'm not a lawyer."

Bob thought Jake's carelessness typical, but he inquired: "Was the doctor who recently saw you satisfied?"

"He was soon satisfied about my head, but he made some experiments: nerve tests, I imagine," Jake replied. "Then he began to talk about the shooting, as if Carlyon had suggested he might persuade me my idea was an illusion. He was logical, but I didn't want to dispute about it with a stranger. In fact I was rather annoyed and perhaps I was not polite. I said I was shot and I knew nobody in the lot I was with used the gun. Arguments would not move me. I *did know*."

"In fact, you were not logical."

"I expect that is so," Jake agreed. "When I'm annoyed I'm nasty. In the meantime, you're not remarkably soothing and I think I'll go to bed."

Bob was rather disturbed and since he wanted to be quiet he went to the hall. He had thought to find nobody about, but Mary occupied a chair by the fireplace. The lamps were not lighted but her clothes shone in the reflections from the grate, and her thin figure cut the dusky background. Her pose was languid and she looked straight in front, as if she pondered. Bob thought the picture charming; although he rather got a sense of fastidious refinement than cultivation. Perhaps Queen's Mary was not intellectually cultivated; he knew her thoroughbred. She looked up and her smile indicated that he might join her.

"You, like Jake, were brooding," Bob remarked. "He declared I made him tired, and he sent me off."

"Jake is not well," said Mary. "I think Carlyon and my aunt are anxious, and a fresh doctor will soon arrive. But I imagine they did not want me to know, and in the meantime Jake must not."

"Then, I expect the fellow will get a jolt; Jake admits he was not polite to the other. Were you brooding about him?"

"My preoccupation was selfish," Mary replied with a smile. "I wondered whether I could, for example, get a post in Canada."

Bob's heart beat. He knew a post he wanted Mary to take and he had pictured her ruling the big wooden house at the mill, but for a time she must not suspect his bold ambition. His ancestors were shipwrights; Mary sprang from altogether different stock. Although Bob was not ashamed of his inheritance, it was important that he had inherited much from sturdy, frugal and rather primitive folk. If Mary loved him she might not be jarred, but since he dared not yet think she did love him, his plan was to wait.

"Canada's a stern country, and where the reward is large, the labor's hard and competition's keen. Much, of course, depends on your talent and training."

"I was trained to be extravagant. I can manage a horse and sail a boat and drive a car. Perhaps that's all. But have you not some use for people who are just willing?"

"Willingness helps and pluck carries one far. Your pluck is fine and I think you might risk it, particularly since my folks would help you get a post. But are you resolved to go? And when do you want to start?"

"I don't yet know. You see, I'm poor, and but for my aunt, I am alone. I feel I cannot stay with her for good. Then after Jake and you are gone. . . . You mean to carry him off. Do you think he'll agree?"

Bob thrilled. It looked as if Mary implied that when he had gone Whitriggs would be dreary. All the same, she was Jake's friend, and perhaps it was for his sake she stayed. Miss Holroyd had said that Mary, so to speak, was in disgrace.

"Although I've used my best arguments, I can't claim I make much progress," he replied. "I doubt if I have much talent for persuasion, and Jake is hard to move. But wouldn't you rather live in Scotland?"

"In order to get a good post in the Old Country one must specialize, and nobody seems to want a woman horsebreaker. Some people design racing boats, and I can *see* the proper model, but one must make intricate calculations and I cannot work an easy sum."

"You might study designing," said Bob, for he thought he saw a plan. "Carlyon and Seward build small fast vessels. To begin with, however, you must weigh things properly. When you have done so I'll make inquiries. . . ."

Bob turned his head. Miss Holroyd and a young man came in. Bob knew Sutton, and liked the fellow. Although he had arrived not long since, he was much about with Miss Holroyd, and Bob wondered whether they had not met before. They stopped and Mary got up.

"We are going," she remarked.

Sutton's look got rather embarrassed, but Miss Holroyd laughed.

"You are an unselfish dear, Mary! I hope Ted's emotions were not very obvious."

Mary went off, and when they were in the passage Bob thought her color high. For all that, she gave him a smile.

"Eva likes to joke. Well, I must weigh my plans, and when I think I see the proper line I will tell you."

She joined a group by the piano, but Bob went to the smoking-room and soon afterward to bed.

In the morning when he was on the terrace Mrs. Carlyon came from the house. Bob got up, but she motioned to him to stay and he fetched her a chair. The sun was on the wall, and in the searching light he noticed the lines on her forehead and about her eyes. Her lips were thin and pale, and her mouth was tight. For all her tired look, he knew her watchful and resolute.

"We are rather disturbed about Jake, and although we had wanted him to remain for the shooting, I think his going for a long cruise is a good plan. We must, however, see if the fresh doctor approves."

"Then, you have sent for another doctor?" Bob inquired.

"The first suggested it. Jake's injury was trifling, but we have some grounds to think he has not altogether recovered from the shock he got in France. I expect you have noticed his recent moodiness?"

Bob admitted that he had done so, and Mrs. Carlyon resumed: "For a young man to be keen about sports and games is not unusual, but Jake has not much balance and sometimes he is carried away. Then a reaction begins and he is bothered by queer morbid fancies. 'Illusions' is perhaps the word."

"For example?" said Bob.

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Carlyon, smiling, "it looks as if he's persuaded Philip Mead shot him. I do not know much about guns, but you were with the party, and I believe you afterwards studied the ground."

"That is so," Bob agreed, although he had thought only Jake knew he went back to the loch. "I found nothing to support Jake's notion."

"Did you expect to find something?"

"On the whole, I did not," Bob replied in a thoughtful voice. "In fact, I told Jake he was ridiculous."

"All the same, he refused to give up his illusion?"

Bob pondered. Mrs. Carlyon dwelt on Jake's *illusion* as if she wanted to fix the word in his mind. He, however, did not see her object and he agreed politely that Jake was obstinate.

"My husband declares Jake inherited his father's temperament," Mrs. Carlyon continued. "St. John Carlyon had talent, but, like Jake, he had not much balance, and sometimes he seems to have been conquered by a strange, jealous savageness. When he was commander in the Navy, he disputed with his captain at a function on board the flagship. I understand he

risked a court-martial, but after an examination by a medical board he was allowed to retire. My husband imagines Jake ought not to know."

Bob wondered why she talked about it. He did not doubt her story, but somehow he felt her hostile to his friend.

"It looks as if Jake ought to cut out liquor, betting and exciting games. Since you agree, why do you let him stay here? The people he meets at Whitriggs are not a remarkably sober lot."

Mrs. Carlyon smiled. "You do not exaggerate, Mr. Seward. Can you force Jake to go?"

"I cannot," said Bob in a quiet voice. "Still, you see I am not his host. If I were, I think I'd try."

"You are sincere," Mrs. Carlyon remarked. "Well, Jake is attached to my husband and to some extent uses him for a model; perhaps, like a beginner, he copies his drawbacks. Jake has a number of attractive qualities; he is our relation, and I frankly cannot send him off. . . ."

She shrugged, and after a moment or two resumed: "I expect you see another line? Well, we like to be amused, we like careless, high-spirited young people, and although perhaps we are selfish, we cannot, for Jake's sake, use fresh rules. Since he's resolved to stay he must use ours, and if he exercises a little control he would not be much hurt. I think that's all, Mr. Seward, but I'm rather glad you and Jake are going for a cruise."

She went to the house and Bob knitted his brows. Since he refused to be sent off Mrs. Carlyon was rather polite than friendly and for the most part left him alone. Now, however, she had talked to him frankly, and he speculated. . . . To begin with, she wanted him to know Jake had inherited his father's unbalanced temperament and was bothered by illusions, but to see her object was another thing. She acknowledged that his word went with Jake. Did she imply that he might control his friend?

Bob doubted. Somehow he felt that if Jake paid for his extravagance, Mrs. Carlyon would not grieve. Well, he did not see much light, and after a time he got up and went off across the lawn.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EXPLOSION

THE last big grouse drive was over, and in the morning a number of the sportsmen would go on to fresh shooting grounds. Dinner was something of a farewell feast, but wine banished melancholy and the jokes and banter were boisterous. For a time Bob played billiards and danced, and then stole away to the quiet hall.

Sitting in a corner, he pulled out his watch. Although it was twelve o'clock, nobody had gone to bed. He heard shouts, and flying footsteps, and noisy laughter. A rag was obviously going on, and it looked as if some of the party were not sober. Anyhow, he had had enough. Since the shooting began Whitriggs was rather like a second-class night club.

By and by a girl leaped into the hall, motioned to Bob to be quiet, and crept into a corner by the fireplace. A few moments afterward Mead flung back the door and looked about the room. He gasped, his fleshy face was red, and his eyes glistened. When Mead drank he was frankly a brute. Turning his head, he saw Bob and frowned.

"I'm on the wrong track. Where you are there's not much sport," he jeered.

Shutting the door noisily, he went off, and the girl came from her hiding-place.

"Thank you! Do you think Phil is lurking in the passage?"

"I don't know," said Bob. "If you like, I'll convoy you to Mrs. Carlyon. Since the fellow ran after you, I suppose you were ragging?"

"Perhaps the rag did account for it," the girl replied and gave him a queer smile. "Then, you see, I slapped Phil, and I think I hit rather hard. He's good fun, but sometimes he doesn't know where to stop."

She was not at all embarrassed, and Bob imagined he amused her. Her smile was somehow inviting, but he was not going to play up.

"Well, shall I see you along the passage?" he inquired.

"I think not," she replied. "You really don't want to be bothered and I mustn't entangle you in our noisy revels. Although your offer's kind, Mr. Seward, I expect Phil is gone and I'll risk it."

Bob was resigned to let her go and he lighted a cigarette. He had been on the moors most of the day, but there was not much use in going to bed before the others went. The night was cold, rain beat the windows, and he heard the wind in the trees. The east wind blew down the firth, and *Whaup* was ready for sea. Food and water were on board, and Bob hoped Jake soon would start. He had for some time left his room and joined the shooters.

Nobody disturbed Bob and he began to muse. A fresh doctor had recently arrived. Since Jake went about, Bob thought this strange, and he knew Jake was annoyed. Jake admitted the doctor's inquiries irritated him, and when he tried to talk about the shooting accident Jake firmly refused. He, however, bantered and tried to puzzle the fellow.

On the whole, Bob was satisfied that Jake's belief that Mead shot him was an illusion; the word stuck, perhaps because Mrs. Carlyon had forced it into his mind. One sensed in Mead a sensual, rather primitive vein, but to picture his lurking behind the wall in order to shoot Jake was ridiculous. In fact, Bob did not see why Carlyon had talked about it to the doctors.

All the same, at dinner Mead had made Jake a subject for his rude jokes. To use control was not Jake's habit, but he had done so and by and by Mead left him alone. Then he had bantered Mary and followed her about. Bob did not know if she were embarrassed. All engaged in noisy games, and so long as Mrs. Carlyon did not meddle, Bob knew he must not. He had not much use for a rag in which young women joined, but in the morning a number would go and Jake perhaps would start for the cruise. Bob meant to urge him. To some extent Jake and Mead had controlled their smoldering antipathy, but a spark might start a dangerous explosion.

At length the rooms on the ground floor got quieter, and shouts and laughter from passages and stairs indicated that the party went to bed. Bob decided to wait and let them go, and when the noise died away he went for his candle. Two or three were on the table, and, picking up some matches, he climbed the stairs. Somebody was in front, and he went slowly.

A window was open and the lamp on a neighboring post had gone out. But for the unsteady reflections from a candle, the top of the steps was dark. The light got faint, as if somebody carried the candle farther off, and the cautious rather uneven steps puzzled Bob. The steps were a man's, but a man ought not to be in the passage: he ought to have turned at the landing and gone up another stair.

After a few moments the light got steady, as if the person who carried the candle had stopped and turned. A girl exclaimed in angry surprise and a man laughed. Bob knew the girl's voice and he went faster. Then it looked as if two people struggled, and Bob leaped up the last steps.

At the top he saw the candle on a window ledge. A yard or two off, Mary Seaton stood by a door she had tried to open. Her head was against the panel, and Mead's hand was on her mouth. Her strained pose and rigid arms indicated that she firmly pushed him back. She fixed her eyes on him, and her look was rather scornful than afraid. Mead grinned, an evil drunken grin, and Bob was moved to primitive savageness. The others did not see him, and he advanced noiselessly.

Seizing Mead's throat, he used his fist where he thought the blow would cut the fellow's breath. Mead must not make a noise; at all events, he must not make much noise. After the party's rough-house frolic, perhaps a quiet scuffle would not excite surprise. For all Bob's rage, he was sternly cool, and when Mead grappled he knew he had an awkward job. The fellow was strongly built and carried some weight.

Somebody ran along the passage, Mead let go, and Bob saw Jake had come to help. He pulled Mead round, and Bob, firmly holding on, pushed him to the steps. Perhaps it was strange, but he thought they had not made much noise. Although the rooms in the passage were occupied, nobody came to a door.

"If he tries to talk, choke the swine," said Jake, and they went down the steps.

When they reached the passage at the bottom, Jake pushed Mead into the dining-room. He used some force and the other went back for three or four yards and struck a chair. His face was purple, his collar was broken, and the marks of Bob's fingers were on his thick neck. Jake's skin was rather white, his eyes sparkled, and his glance was very stern.

"Unless you'd sooner take your thrashing, stand up and fight, you unthinkable beast!"

"Go slow. The job is mine," said Bob.

Jake waved him back. "If you meddle, I have no more use for you. I'm host and the swine annoyed my guest." He turned to Mead. "You are my man, and now you haven't a gun!"

"You're a crazy fool. I had nothing to do with your getting shot," Mead rejoined, and Bob saw he was soberer than he had thought. "Had I wanted to shoot you, you gave me chances to do so when nobody would have doubted it was an accident. However, if you want to fight, I mean to knock you out."

"Get to it!" said Jake, with grim quietness.

The room was large and all the lights were not yet out, but the men did not maneuver. Mead leaped for Jake, took a nasty blow, and clinched. Bob saw he trusted his weight, and for a few moments he was afraid for Jake.

The fight was the logical climax of the bitter aversion they had long indulged, and until one was broken, it would not stop. Moreover, Bob imagined they would not bother about the rules of the boxing ring; at last, their smoldering passions had exploded and they fought like animals whose object was to kill.

By and by Mead's back struck the table and his grasp got slacker. Jake twisted himself free and used his fists. Mead's guard was awkward; it looked as if the jar had shaken him, and his face was marked by blood. Breaking away from the table, he tried a savage rush. Jake's foot moved sideways, his body swung to the left and his right arm shot out. His fist reached the other's ribs, and Mead stumbled by like a drunken man.

He recovered and fronted his antagonist. For a moment or two they stopped and gasped, their eyes fixed on one another, their chests straining. Then they grappled, and Bob thought Jake was rash: his part was to trust his speed and nimbleness, but it looked as if all he wanted was to batter his enemy. So far, neither had used a shabby trick, and Bob could see no grounds to meddle. If he did meddle, he must use muscular force; he did not imagine they would weigh his arguments.

Striking, gasping, straining, they reeled about the floor. They collided with the chairs, and Bob jumped to move a tall pillar lamp. By and by Mead's boot jarred on the fender, and it looked as if they would fall across the big old-fashioned grate. Mead, however, seemed to know where he was, for his arm went down behind him, and Bob ran round the table.

Before he arrived Mead seized an iron from the hearth and drove the nob against Jake's bent head. Jake staggered back against the table and grasped a heavy glass decanter. His head was cut and his face was streaked dull white and red. Mead, balancing the shining poker, advanced a foot or two. Bob stepped between them.

"Keep off!" said Jake in a hoarse voice. "Blast you! Leave us alone!"

Bob hesitated. He thought Mead began to be afraid, and saw he must knock out the other. The important thing was it was all he did see: the fellow did not weigh the consequences. If Bob seized Jake, Mead would not stop—he would use the poker. Then Bob heard steps.

Jake rashly moved his eyes from the other's face; Mead swung out his arm and leaped. The bright poker shone, but Jake turned and stooped, and the iron, sweeping by, touched his arm. Then his body straightened, and the decanter went up. Cut glass and yellow wine reflected the light: Mead plunged backward and the irons in the fireplace crashed.

“The madman has killed Phil!” somebody screamed, and a woman ran across the floor.

Bob was first at the fireplace. Mead’s back was on the marble fender, his eyes were open and his arm was bent as if he tried to get up. Jake, a yard off, balanced the decanter. Bob seized it, and, breaking Jake’s hold, flung the vessel across the room. The pillar lamp clanged and rocked. The flame leaped up and went out.

Jake, breathing hard, leaned against the table; Mead’s head went back, his body rolled from the fender to the rug, and he was quiet. Mrs. Carlyon stopped by his feet, looking down at him, and Carlyon turned to Bob. His ruddy color had vanished and his hands shook. Bob thought his nerve was gone, but Mrs. Carlyon was sterner stuff. Her pose was very quiet, and she studied Mead with a strange, ominous calm. Yet, not long since, she had screamed. Bob wondered whether she had not thought the scream worth while.

“I think he’s dead, but we must get a doctor,” she said.

“An awkward job! A damned awkward job!” Carlyon agreed hoarsely.

Mrs. Carlyon gave him a scornful glance. “You would not use proper caution, and you must bear the consequences. Go to the telephone, then call the servants and take Jake to his room. We must not run a fresh risk.”

Bob was puzzled, but he stopped Carlyon. “To begin with, help me move Mead from the fireplace.”

They carried him to a long window-seat, and Bob pulled back the front of his white shirt.

“I doubt if he is dead, but he got a very nasty knock. Well, you must call the doctor, but I don’t know about the servants. Do you imply Jake’s your prisoner, ma’am?”

“Until the doctor arrives, he must keep his room. I dare not leave him at liberty.”

“You don’t imagine I’ll attack Bob or Carlyon?” said Jake in a dull voice. “I was forced to stop Phil—he’d got the poker.”

“His seizing the poker was justified; you meant to kill him. Your uncle and I saw the end of the struggle.”

“Phil was not justified; he used a treacherous cruel trick,” said somebody farther off, and Bob saw others were in the room.

Mary leaned against the wall. Since the shaken lamp went out the light was not good, and her thin black evening clothes were indistinct against the dull paneling. Only her face and arms cut the background. They were

vaguely white, and Bob imagined the blood had left her skin. At the door were Miss Holroyd and Sutton. Bob did not know when they had arrived, but in the circumstances their doing so unseen was not remarkable. All, however, were Jake's friends, and it looked as if he needed their help.

"Miss Seaton's statement is accurate," Sutton remarked. "I hope Mead's not dead, but he asked for all he got. The first thing's to get a doctor."

Carlyon and Bob went to the telephone, and when the message was sent Bob twisted the cord round the mouthpiece, braced his feet and pulled. The wires broke behind the boards and Bob smiled. Carlyon had called the doctor, but he would not for some time send another message. Bob went back to the dining-room. Mead had not moved; his face was chalky white, and Bob doubted if he breathed. Jake leaned against the table, his head was slackly bent and he looked dazed. Carlyon walked about with short jerky steps. Mrs. Carlyon's mouth was tight, and the lines on her forehead were distinct. Bob saw she calculated and her calm daunted him; he noticed that Miss Holroyd studied her.

"What are you going to do about it?" he inquired.

"When the doctor arrives we shall know," Mrs. Carlyon replied. "Jake must wait for him in his room."

"Mead needs a doctor; I do not," said Jake, in a dull voice. "I've seen two, and I've had enough."

Mrs. Carlyon gave him a queer look. "Perhaps we ought to have enlightened you sooner. For your sake we did not, but after your recent exploit you must be informed. Liquor and the shock you got in France do not altogether explain your queer temperament and ridiculous illusions. Unless you submit to some control, the load you have inherited will break you."

"If you mean I'm like my father, I won't grumble," Jake rejoined, but his look was strained as if he were afraid.

"Your father was dismissed from the Navy. He insulted an important officer, and when inquiries were made other extravagancies were found out and he was examined by a medical board."

"Is that so?" Jake asked Carlyon in a hoarse voice.

"You must face it, Jake. Only the doubt about my brother's saneness saved him from a court-martial."

Jake turned his head and his pose went slack. Mrs. Carlyon's cruelty fired Bob's blood. He thought it calculated; she was willing to hurt Jake, and she wanted the others to know. Then Miss Holroyd advanced.

“Ted and Bob will see Jake to his room,” she said. “Have you all you may want for Mead? Brandy and so forth?”

Carlyon nodded. Mrs. Carlyon bent over Mead, and Miss Holroyd got the others from the room. They made some noise, and when she shut the door she quietly turned and pulled out the key.

“I expect Carlyon will try the windows, but the mullions are close and he is rather fat,” she said. “Anyhow, we must risk his getting through. I don’t think he’ll call the servants and he may decide to stay by Mead. If we are quick, we may have all fixed before he can bother us. Get some outdoor clothes and join me in the billiard-room in two or three minutes.”

Bob knew she saw a plan, and, seizing Jake’s arm, he started for the stairs.

CHAPTER XV

FLIGHT

BOB threw some clothes into a bag and went to the billiard-room. All was quiet; the servants occupied the back of the house, and at Whitriggs noisy revels were not unusual. Bob rather thought Carlyon could get out through the dining-room window, but perhaps for some time he would not try. He probably imagined Jake was in his room, and his business was to stay by Mead.

For all that, Jake must get off. Bob doubted if Mead were dead, but it was possible, and he began to see Jake ran another risk. Mrs. Carlyon was his antagonist and Bob was frankly afraid of her. The fight, however, to some extent, was now a woman's fight, and he imagined Miss Holroyd had a plan. She and Mary came in with Sutton, who carried two traveling bags. Her eyes sparkled and her color was high.

"What about the telephone?" she asked.

"I fixed that," Bob said dryly.

"Carlyon called the doctor. How long will he be?"

"If his car is fast, half an hour," Jake replied.

"Then we must start. What about your boat?"

"We can sail in ten minutes after I get on board, but I don't think I'll go. If Mead does not come round I ought to stand my trial. Ted and Bob saw the fight."

"Mary and I saw the fight. I don't know much about Scottish law, but I doubt if you would be tried," said Miss Holroyd in a meaning voice. "At all events, Mrs. Carlyon doesn't want the police to meddle. Don't you and Bob yet see? Two doctors, one of whom is an alienist I expect; your illusions and your frenzied attack on Phil!"

The blood leaped to Jake's skin, and he gave her a haughty look. Then he knitted his brows, and his face got white and very stern.

"Although it looks unthinkable, I believe I do see! You mean, Mrs. Carlyon worked on my dislike for Mead, stage-managed the thing, and fixed my part? She thought I, myself, would satisfy the doctors I was mad?"

“Something like that. You played up nobly, but I don’t know if she reckoned on your knocking out her confederate.”

“I suppose the doctors could give her power . . . ?” Bob inquired, and stopped.

“In England, if two doctors agree a man ought to be put under restraint, his relations can ask for an order to shut him up,” Sutton replied. “I’m not a lawyer, but in the circumstances, for Jake to prove he didn’t need control would be hard. However, time is going. Eva means to see you out, and she’s cleverer than the lot.”

“Ted and I will use his fast new car,” Miss Holroyd resumed. “We will start for Glasgow by the west coast. The plan is to give Carlyon as long a run as possible. You might perhaps do something to the other cars’ magnetos.”

“Miss Seaton must not stay here,” said Bob. “Unless you provide for her, I’m not going.”

“I’m with Bob. My relations shall not make Mary pay for me,” Jake declared.

Mary gave Bob a quick shy glance. Miss Holroyd smiled.

“Mary goes with you.”

“But I cannot,” said Mary, and blushed like a rose.

“You must. To indulge your old-fashioned prudery may cost Jake much and will not help you. We are modern and I must be frank: I’m not persuaded Phil is dead, and he’s an amorous, revengeful brute. You know your aunt, and I expect you know Bob. But Carlyon may try the window, and we mustn’t talk. Steal off, Jake, and run Ted’s car out of the garage. Disable the others.”

Jake went off, and Miss Holroyd said to Sutton: “Get up, Ted. Give Bob your fountain-pen. He can use a sheet from the scoring-pad.”

Sutton, looking rather embarrassed, advanced, and she gave him her hand. She faced the others, and although her color was high, her look was proud.

“I expect you know Ted’s my lover? We are going to elope, but he’s conventional and wants to put all straight. Well, we are in Scotland, and the Scottish marriage laws are not very stern. Buck up, Ted. You know the formula——”

“I don’t know, but I’ll try,” said Sutton. “I, Edward Thornburn Sutton, of Redcliff, Lancashire, acknowledge Eva Holroyd, recently of Nethercleugh, York, my lawful wife.”

Miss Holroyd's declaration was shorter, and Bob wrote fast. He and Mary wrote their names for witnesses, and he gave the paper to Miss Holroyd. He imagined she was now Mrs. Sutton, and he said: "Pluck and stanchness like yours deserves some reward. I hope the document will stand."

"If it stands until we can get an English license, it will meet the bill," Sutton replied.

"Ted's fastidious," Mrs. Sutton remarked, and when Mary kissed her, resumed: "Now I expect he's satisfied, and we must start. I didn't think to use another's clothes for my wedding-dress, but I'll take your coat and hat, my dear. Perhaps you noticed that I had your bag?"

Bob was moved. Mrs. Sutton boasted her modernity, but she was a woman, and he imagined the bleak hurried wedding jarred. Yet she knew speed was important, and she did not grumble. Then Mary steered them noiselessly to the back of the house, and when they reached the garage, Sutton's car was outside.

"They won't start the others for some time, and she'll carry all," Jake remarked. "If you let me drive, I think I can steer her up the cart-track to the old steadings behind the Waterfoot. A pretty good lane goes on across the moor to the road."

The party got on board, Jake started the engine, and when the car ran quietly to the gate Bob turned and looked back across the lawn. All was quiet, and but for the glimmer from the dining-room windows the house was dark. The old tower's broken battlements topped the vague blurred trees. Bob looked in front and hoped he had done with Whitriggs. In the dark, the house was forbidding, and its mistress daunted him.

Jake switched on the lights and let the engine go. The car plunged down a stony hill and after a time left the road. Dry-stone walls and ragged hedges rolled by. The wheels leaped in the holes, and the springs cracked. The cart-track was horribly uneven and Bob thought Jake would take the ditch, but at length he drove across rushy grass and stopped at a broken barn. Jake gave Sutton his hand and Mary and Bob got down. Mrs. Sutton kissed Mary and spoke to Jake:

"Mrs. Carlyon's story has perhaps some foundation, but I think not much. She's the sort to use a grain of truth to carry a load of falsehood. Don't be downhearted."

Then she turned to Bob and resumed quietly: "You will see Jake out, and if you are not a fool you'll keep all you have got. I think you have a prize. Good luck!"

The car rolled ahead, and when it vanished in the dark, Jake touched Bob.

"Come on! The Waterfoot's a mile off and the tide ebbs."

He gave Mary his arm, and they pushed through a hedge and across a boggy field. Then they climbed a loose wall and when they jumped stones crashed in the grass. Bob heard stampeding sheep and circling plover. The noise died away, and he stumbled across furrows and turnip shaws. A bracing east wind searched the fields, and his spirits rose. The wind blew down the firth, and the tide was with the wind. For all that Mrs. Carlyon would soon get busy, and they must make good speed.

When they reached the Waterfoot all were breathless, but Jake ran the dinghy down across the stones. Bob plunged into the water, and when Jake picked up the oars, turned and held out his arms. Mary hesitated, but her pluck was good, and when Bob carried her on board he thrilled. He pushed off the boat and Jake began to row.

The tide swept them down the channel, and soon *Whaup's* tall mast cut the gloom. The dinghy bumped against the planks; they pulled her on board and Bob's heart beat. Whitriggs was behind the hills, and in front was open sea.

"You had better get below and light the lamps," Jake said to Mary. "We'll throw a jib over the glass."

"I'll help make sail," said Mary, and rolled back the mainsail cover.

Jake went to the cable, Bob to the halyards, and when the gaff went up he began to sing. He Bowdlerized the famous chanty, but, hauling at peak and throat, he roared the clipper seamen's chorus. His heart beat joyously, and he was moved by a gay confidence he had not known for long. He had no talent for intrigue, but the fight was now an open fight. His part was a sailor's part, the boat was stanch, and Mary was on board.

Jake helped him sweat up the peak, and they hoisted the jib. Mary went to the helm.

"All's clear!" Jake shouted. "On which tack will you cast off?"

"Starboard," said Mary. "Head sheet to windward! Let go!"

The chain splashed; *Whaup* listed and forged ahead. The list got steeper and the water frothed noisily under the lee bow.

"Main sheet!" said Mary. "Helm's hard up! Ease her to the jibe."

Whaup came round. Sail and boom lurched across, and she leaped down channel before the keen east wind. Bob began to set up the runner tackles, and Mary asked: "Will you take the helm?"

Bob pushed Jake. Sometime Mary must ponder and brood, but he did not want her to do so yet. Jake said they must hoist the topsail, and when the sail was up, Bob sat down at the top of the cabin steps and lighted his pipe. Small white seas rolled behind the boat, and Mary's slender figure was dark against the sky. Two faint twinkling beams pierced the gloom along the Scottish shore, and across the firth pale reflections on the sky marked the steelworks' fires in Cumberland. In front all was leaden gray.

By and by Jake went to the tiller and ordered Bob to use the lead. Bob got three fathoms, and after a time coiled the line and pushed down a long boathook.

"Six feet!" he called. "Now she shoals a foot!"

"Haul sheets," said Jake. "We mustn't take the ground. I had hoped to get across, but the pool is silting up."

He luffed the boat, Bob let go the anchor, and they lowered sail. *Whaup* rode smoothly and Bob knew the channel was bordered by the sands. It looked as if they must wait for the tide to rise. They went to the cabin and Bob pulled back the slide. Two candle lamps on swivels slanted gently across the bulkhead, a blast-stove throbbed in the forecastle, and the cabin was warm. Food was on the table, and Bob brewed coffee, but when he carried in the pot he sensed a strain he had not known before. So long as the boat was going, one could concentrate on one's job; but now all knew they must ponder.

"Cold ham?" Jake said to Mary. "Bob has the bread. Take a good supper; we'll get some sea when the flood-tide runs. Well, the situation's awkward, and I feel I have entangled you. The only comfort is you and Bob are first-class pals."

"If Mary does not grumble, I shall not," Bob rejoined. "Anyhow, you'd have been a fool to stay."

Mary blushed, but she said quietly, "It was unthinkable, Jake! For you to stay would be to play up to Mrs. Carlyon."

Bob thought the remark cost her something, and he noted she did not acknowledge Mrs. Carlyon her aunt.

"I did play up," said Jake with grim humor. "I tried to bluff and puzzle the doctors. But do you think Mrs. Carlyon, so to speak, calculated on my folly? Eva Sutton claims it was so."

"Eva did not exaggerate," Mary replied, and turned her head, but when she looked up her glance was resolute. "I must be open, Jake. For some time I suspected and was anxious—but you see, I didn't *know*, and after all, she was my aunt——"

"Of course! You are loyal. But do you think Carlyon knew?"

"Yes; he wanted your money, but he has not his wife's firmness, and the plan was hers. I believe they used Mead. Although I do not believe he tried to shoot you, they exploited his dislike for you."

Bob agreed. Mrs. Sutton had enlightened him; but he imagined Jake had not yet got all the light he ought to get, and although he saw Mary's embarrassment he allowed her to go on.

"Mrs. Carlyon encouraged the ragging and Carlyon gave Mead liquor," she resumed. "When we went for our candles I believe she signaled Mead; I heard his laugh. He was not very sober, and some people think a rag justifies . . . I do not, and to know my relations, in order to hurt you, were willing for the fellow to humiliate me, was rather horrible. Now perhaps you see why I allowed you to carry me off? Since Mrs. Carlyon saw I was in the dining-room when you fought, I was afraid——"

She stopped, and her face got crimson. Jake clenched his fist, and for a few moments looked straight in front. Then he said, "It's done with, Mary; we will not talk about the thing again. I'm a fool; I trusted Carlyon and tried to copy him. Bob, Eva and Ledsham warned me, but I was obstinate. Well, it looks as if my friends must pay for my blind stubbornness."

"I do not think Eva will mind. She had meant to marry Ted, and to elope with him was something of an exploit. All the same, her helping us was fine. She has my bag and clothes. It's possible Carlyon will follow her and Ted."

"A forked trail is puzzling," Bob remarked. "In the meantime we ought to fix where we'll go."

Jake got up and pushed back the sliding hatch. The others heard the halyards beat the mast and the ripples splash against the bows. Then a boathook rattled on the deck and Jake came back.

"The water begins to rise; the east wind's fresh. Douglas is our port, and we ought to run across in about nine hours. When Carlyon finds out the boat is not at her moorings I think he'll expect us to follow the Scottish coast. Besides, Douglas is now crowded by holiday-makers, and our arrival will not be conspicuous. Then Mary could get a steamer for Liverpool."

Mary nodded. Her look was thoughtful and rather disturbed.

"I have friends at Hereford. They are not relations, but until I find a post I might stay with them."

"You could get a post in Canada," Bob remarked.

"I think not yet," said Mary in a quiet voice. "At all events, for us to get on board a liner might be awkward."

“That is so,” Jake agreed. “Anyhow, you are not going to Hereford; you’ll join my aunts in Westmorland. Although they’re frankly Victorian, they are fine old ladies, and since they hate Carlyon they will see he doesn’t bother you. You will carry my letter, and at Douglas we’ll telegraph. But there’s another thing: you will need some money.”

“No, Jake! I have thirty pounds a year, and I have five pounds now.”

Bob liked Mary’s pluck. She was going to strangers and she had five pounds! Jake smiled.

“You will be forced to spend a night at Liverpool, and if Mrs. Carlyon has anything to do with it, before you can get your thirty pounds some time may pass. We are pals and confederates. I’m your proper banker.”

Mary hesitated, and Bob knew he must not meddle. Jake, however, was firm, and he forced her to take some notes.

“Thank you, Jake. You’re generous,” she said. “But ought we not to start? When day breaks we mustn’t be near the coast. If you hoist sail I’ll put up the dishes.”

“Until breakfast the cabin’s yours,” said Jake, and he and Bob went to the cockpit.

For a moment or two Jake leaned against the coaming, and then he said, “My father’s temper was hot, but he was kind and just. I cannot believe his brain was weak.”

“He was my father’s friend; the old man thought much of him,” Bob replied.

“Very well. You knew me in Canada. Had you any grounds to think me mad? I want a straight answer.”

“I had none.”

“That’s some comfort. Until I was buried in the cabaret cellar, I believe my impulses were healthy and normal——”

“Shell-shock has bothered others; it wears off,” said Bob. “My notion is, Carlyon lied. But let’s get to work.”

CHAPTER XVI

MARY'S REFUSAL

MIST tossed about the Manx hills, the rocks along the shore were dark, and *Whaup* ran before the tumbling seas for Douglas Bay. Her mainsail carried a reef, her staysail was down, and her deck was wet. When she rolled, her boom went up, and Jake sweated at the helm. Gray and inconspicuous, she drove on through the mist.

Although the day was bleak, motor-boats and sailboats crossed her track. Ahead was a row of slanting masts and half-hoisted sails, and punts carried excursionists from the beach. Where boats were numerous Bob thought another would not be noticed, and he fixed his eyes on the piers by Douglas Head. Tall masts and big red funnels topped the walls and sheds. Two or three passenger boats were in harbor, and he wondered where they went. If the police had used the telegraph Jake and he might run some risk, but he must put Mary on board the Liverpool steamer.

"Where are you going to bring up?" he inquired.

"We don't want to be conspicuous. I think we'll run in among the fleet," Jake replied. "Perhaps the best plan's to pick up somebody's moorings; and then if we are forced to clear out we need not heave anchor. I suppose I mustn't land?"

"It would be rash," said Mary. "Bob will row me to the pier."

They ran behind the boats, and when a keg, girdled by a rope, tossed in the foam, Bob jumped for the bows. *Whaup* came round head-to-wind, and he hooked the keg and hauled up a heavy chain. Then they lowered sail, but left all loose and ready to hoist, and Bob pushed over the folding dinghy. Jake carried Mary's bag from the cabin and she gave him her hand.

"I know your pride, but you must allow my relations to help," he said. "They are kind old ladies, and I expect they will not be willing to let you go. If you're content to stay with them I'll feel they are doing something to pay my debt to you."

"If they will help me find a post it's all I want," said Mary in a quiet voice.

A white-topped comber flung the dinghy against the yacht. Bob put the bag on a thwart and held the little boat. Mary, steadying herself by the mizzen shroud, balanced on the tilted counter; Mrs. Sutton's coat was large and blew about her; she was forced to hold the other's hat, and in the background a rain-squall rolled across the bay. Bob thought she looked very girlish and forlorn, and he was moved to disturbing pity. Mary was going to strangers and had done with all she knew. Then she braced up and smiled.

"Good luck, Jake! As soon as it's safe to do so you must let me know where you are."

She jumped into the lurching boat and Bob shoved off. Jake waved his cap, the dinghy was blown to leeward, and Bob got out the oars. Rain beat his face and he pulled cautiously. The boat was very small, and if a comber struck her abeam he risked a capsize. Steering obliquely for the piers, he eased her where the gray seas broke, but the wind bothered him and the foam leaped the gunwale. To pull round a high wall was some relief, and a minute or two afterward he made fast by some weedy steps.

The rain was getting heavy, and dejected tourists hurried along the pier. Mary's coat and boots were wet and her bag was stained by salt water. At the top of the steps she shook straight her clothes, and Bob thought the smile she gave him brave.

"So far it looks as if our arrival interested nobody, and I ought to pass for a cheap excursionist. Well, I suppose to be crumpled and draggled does not bother a man?"

Bob felt Mary, in one sense, had not much grounds to bother. Mrs. Sutton's coat did not altogether hide her slender body's flowing lines; wind and rain had touched her skin with carmine, and her small finely molded face was like a cameo. One knew Queen's Mary to be thoroughbred.

"You'll get a brush and all you want at a hotel," he said. "After the stove unshipped, the meal Jake cooked was not a success, and we need some food. But perhaps we ought to ask about your steamer."

The first boat for Liverpool did not sail for two hours, but when Bob inquired for a hotel Mary stopped him.

"No," she said. "A tea-shop, and it must not be fashionable. Since we want to be thought excursionists we must go where they go."

For a time they followed the promenade along the noble sweep of bay. The rain had driven the holiday-makers from the streets; the clanging tram-cars and tall houses were wet. All was black and cheerless, and the gray sea foamed along the beach. Then Mary steered for an arch from which a flight of steps went underground, and studied the bill-of-fare on a board.

“It is not expensive,” she remarked. “I think this is where we ought to lunch.”

They went down. The long room was rather dark and cold, and they found a table in a corner commanding the door. Bob felt he ought to watch the door; he must not indulge his imagination, but it was possible the police had begun their search. Three or four wet and spiritless tourists occupied another table some distance off, and when he rang a bell a languid waitress advanced and rubbed the marble slab with a greasy rag.

The girl brought the meal he ordered and a large teapot. Although the plates and cups were thick the food was better than he had expected, and the tea was fragrant. He imagined Mary had not before used American nickeled knives, and plates like granite slabs. So far as he could see, however, she was not jarred, and as soon as he was served she began to eat. Bob himself was altogether satisfied; so long as Mary gave him his cup and plate, he would cheerfully have eaten much worse stuff. By and by she looked up.

“One ought not to be greedy, but I should like some more.”

“I expect you feel you must be polite? You don’t want to let down your host,” Bob remarked, and called the tired waitress.

“Oh, no,” said Mary, smiling, “that does not account for it. Liverpool is seventy miles off, and I really should not like to wait till breakfast.”

“They serve dinner on big passenger boats, and you are a sailor.”

“The trouble is, I expect the others are not,” said Mary, and resumed in a thoughtful voice: “*Whaup* is on a lee shore, and if the wind gets fresher you may be bothered to row the dinghy off.”

“For all that, I mean to wait until your steamer starts.”

“Oh, well,” said Mary, “I tried to be noble, but I would really sooner you didn’t go. So long as you are about I feel my adventure has not begun. To go on board the steamer and start alone is another thing.”

She turned her head and the waitress noisily put down the food, but Bob thrilled. To know Mary wanted him to stay was some comfort. When the waitress carried away the plates she looked at the watch on her wrist.

“The wet streets are dreary, Bob. Nobody fresh is coming in, and I expect they’ll let us wait. When you and Jake sail, where do you think you’ll steer for?”

“To begin with, we’ll run round behind the island and heave to in smooth water for the night. Then I expect we’ll sail across to the Irish coast. Some Canadian boats touch at Bangor; but I don’t yet know—in fact, I doubt if we could get on board. After all, if Jake could have stayed and stood his trial——”

Mary nodded. She understood Bob's reserve; the important thing was, they did not know if Mead were dead.

"Had Jake stayed it would have helped. One is entitled to defend oneself, and we saw Mead seize the poker. But of course he could not stay."

"How long were you in the room?" Bob inquired.

Mary blushed, but she gave Bob a steady glance.

"I was there from the beginning, although I could not meddle. When you pushed Mead downstairs I went after you. Perhaps you would sooner I had screamed and run away? Well, I am a Border Scot; the quarrel was mine, and Jake was my champion. You were with him, but you were a stranger, and I knew his antagonists. Mead was not the worst."

Bob thought about the loyal Scottish women whose exploits are famous yet. Queen's Mary sprang from stock like theirs.

"You are Mary Seaton; there is your apology. It goes all the way."

"Ah," said Mary, "you're romantic; but my object is not to justify myself. Jake is not soon daunted. His trial was not the danger; he saw the other risk. People know his queer moodiness, and perhaps his father really was forced to leave the Navy——"

"On the whole, I think it was so. Carlyon had some foundation for his statement, but I knew the old commander, and he certainly was not mad."

"Then Jake's thinking Mead tried to shoot him was an illusion," Mary resumed in a queer, uneven voice. "He might have seen he was ridiculous, but his uncle bantered him and he's obstinate. Then he admits he rather maliciously tried to puzzle the doctors. He thought it a joke! He did not know Carlyon counted on his freakish humor. The plan was horribly clever; after his fighting Mead, it looks as if Carlyon were forced to shut him up. And Mrs. Carlyon is my relation, Bob!"

"You have done with her," Bob said gently. "When you left Whitriggs you cut out all it stands for."

Mary said nothing, and for a few minutes Bob left her alone. Although he knew her pluck, she was flesh and blood and she had borne some strain. He thought her happy to quit Whitriggs, but she had no home, and the talents she had cultivated were not utilitarian. All she had was her beauty, her sincerity and her pride.

He looked about. For the most part the excursionists had gone, and only two or three people occupied a table across the floor. They were not at all interested, and he thought they waited for a boat. His heart beat and he knew himself ridiculous. One does not court a princess in a second-class tea-shop.

He saw his rashness might cost him something, but he could not let Mary go.

"When I have put Jake on board ship, will you marry me?" he asked.

Mary looked up, and although her color came and went, she gave him a faint smile.

"No, Bob! Sometimes you are very nice, but I will not marry you because you think me forlorn."

"Ah," said Bob, "you attracted me as soon as I arrived, but I thought Jake your lover, and afterwards I was afraid. I wanted my kind frank sailor pal, but I began to sense another girl, so to speak, in the girl I knew. For the most part she was elusive, but sometimes I saw her plainly: proud and fine and fastidious. She stood for the old traditions; she was Queen's Mary! Well, I dared not make love to a girl like that."

Mary studied him, and although her glance was calm she was moved. She liked his modesty, and she knew him generous and sincere; in fact, Bob was a man to trust. Yet she would not allow him to carry her away. All he really knew about her was, she was Mrs. Carlyon's niece. Then her lover must not be sorry for her, and to some extent Bob was moved by pity.

"I'm sorry, but I must be firm. Had we not been forced to run away, you would not have asked me."

"Perhaps I would have waited; but that is all."

Mary smiled, a rather dreary smile. "It looks as if you did not see the obstacles. If Mead does not get better we may soon be in prison. Then I'm independent, and perhaps I am rather proud. I do not want a husband who felt he ought to marry his confederate. The argument's ridiculous, but it weighs, and I see others. We mustn't dispute, Bob. Although you're a very good sort I will not engage to marry you."

"Very well. For a time I will not bother you. When Jake is safe in Canada and I begin to make good at the mill, I'll come back and I hope you'll let me talk about it again."

"Then you would be willing to come back? How far is it?"

"If I can persuade you, I would not think it far. The distance is six thousand miles," Bob replied with a twinkle.

"Ah," said Mary, "you are very obstinate!" She stopped for a moment and blushed when she resumed: "I don't know if you could persuade me. So far as I now see I ought to refuse; but if you are in England perhaps you might try—that is all, Bob. I wonder whether the rain is gone?"

Bob saw he must indulge her. He was luckier than he had hoped, and he climbed the steps to the street. The wind was keen, but the sky was clearer and the pavements had begun to dry. He went back, and when he paid his bill the waitress looked at him with surprise. Bob felt he was entitled to be generous, and the girl was tired.

Half an hour afterward Mary and he joined the crowd in front of a big red-funnel steamer. Two policemen strolled about the granite wall, and although Bob did not think they studied him, he pushed in among the passengers. At the bottom of the gangway he was asked if he had a ticket, and Mary took her bag. The others pressed about them, but she stopped and gave Bob her hand. Now she must let him go, she hesitated. She knew she would be lonely when he was gone.

"Good-by, Bob, and good luck! You mustn't bother about me. See Jake out!"

The others forced her up the gangway, and somebody pulled Bob back. Mary vanished in the crowd and Bob went along the pier. A bell rang, the whistle's deep note echoed in the rocks across the harbor; the paddles noisily revolved and ropes splashed in the eddying foam.

The long black hull swung out from the pier and a wave curled against the bows. Bob's glance searched the rail, and when a small gray figure waved a handkerchief his heart beat. He waved his cap, and the boat's long lines foreshortened; smoke rolled from the red funnels, the groups by the rail got indistinct, and Mary was gone.

CHAPTER XVII

JAKE RECKONS UP

THE steamer melted in the haze and Bob pulled the dinghy to the steps. Mary was gone, and he must think for himself and Jake. *Whaup* was on a lee shore, and to run into harbor might be risky. The sea was rising, and unless he got on board soon, the dinghy might swamp.

At the pierhead he twisted his body and looked across the bows. The gray rollers were large and some curled and broke in angry foam. If the little boat slued on the tumbling crest she would capsize. He must humor her; going easy where the seas were large and pulling ahead in the smooths. All the same, he must make some speed. The humming noise ahead indicated that the wind got fresher.

The trouble was, when one rowed to windward one could not properly watch the seas, and by and by the boat plunged into an angry wave. Bob felt her lift and water beat his back; and then he was in the trough, and a steep white-topped ridge curled in front. To hold her straight was the only plan; if the sea did not break on board he might get across.

She went up, foam rolled across the gunwale, and when she plunged the water washed about his boots. Somehow he got across and steered her over the next tossing crest. The three large seas were gone, and now, by contrast, he ought to get a smooth. He must make progress when progress was possible, but to drive the light dinghy to windward was an awkward job. He wanted to throw out some water, but he dared not stop rowing.

When he reached the row of boats his breath was short and the dinghy was half swamped. Jake threw him a rope, and they pulled her up and stowed her, folded, in the cockpit. *Whaup* was plunging savagely, and when her bows went up the chain rang like a bell. Men on board the other boats got ready to run for harbor.

“I have tied another reef,” said Jake. “She won’t ride much longer. Let’s get off.”

They hoisted the shortened mainsail and a little storm jib. Bob pulled the sheet to windward, and Jake jumped for the tiller. The chain rattled across the bow and *Whaup* plunged ahead. Although the spray blew about her she

went buoyantly, and Bob, getting under the deck to windward, lighted his pipe.

"I reckon I've earned a smoke," he said. "Where are we going?"

"To begin with, we'll run for the Calf of Man; I want the island between us and the sea that will soon get up. Then I don't know . . . Had you any grounds to think the police looked out for us?"

"On the whole I had not," Bob replied, and noted Jake's relief.

A big white sea rolled up on the boat's quarter, and Jake pulled the tiller across and let the mainsheet run. Water leaped on board, the boom went up, and the mainsail swelled like a balloon. The tide made to windward; *Whaup*, running before the seas, sheered about, and Jake concentrated on his steering. If he allowed her to fall off and the boom lurched across, something would go.

She stemmed the angry current; rocks and hills rolled by and melted. Dusk fell, but bright beams pierced the rain, and when the blaze from the Chickens Rock touched the water Bob jumped on deck. To starboard vague black heights dropped to the sea; in front, as far as he could distinguish, a savage turmoil raged. The flood-tide, following the island's western side, surged round the corner, and the Chickens Reef and the uneven bottom broke the urgent stream. Moreover, the wind blew the other way, and when a strong breeze holds back the tide, a race is an awkward spot. For a moment or two Bob studied the swollen, straining sail.

"Shall I ease down the peak?" he asked.

"No," said Jake shortly. "See if the forescuttle's tight and the cabin hatch is fast. We have got to drive her through."

Bob crawled along the deck; *Whaup's* rail was two or three inches high, and he would sooner not trust his feet. When he returned he was satisfied that unless the sea flooded the cockpit no water would get below, and, pulling down his oilskin cap, he sheltered behind the coaming. He admitted he was willing for Jake to steer.

Rolling and plunging, *Whaup* fronted the turmoil. Now she was straight before the wind, her mast swung with erratic jerks. Sometimes the boom was nearly upright, and sometimes her deck was under water. The helmsman's business was to hold her straight, and Bob was glad he knew his job. Jake's moods were queer and he was freakish, but when the strain got hard his nerve was good.

Water began to splash under the cockpit floor, and Bob pulled up a board. When he pushed down his hand his skin was wet, and he started the pump. The lurches threw him against the coaming, and soon he was battered

and forced to stop. In the meantime *Whaup* forged ahead, and by and by the ragged broken seas got longer and their advance against the tide was rhythmical. The boat was pulling out from the race, and presently Jake signaled to Bob to haul the sheet.

Whaup luffed, and Bob saw they were round the Calf and running behind the island's western coast. The white seas sank, and soon only angry ripples, wrinkling the long heave, splashed about the boat. Jake, his back against the tiller, beat his cramped arms, and Bob began to pump.

Some time afterward they brought up under a high shadowy head. Not far off, lights twinkling in the gloom marked a harbor and a little town. Bob hung up the riding lantern and saw all was fast and the cable held. The boat rolled and the halyards beat the mast, but the dusky swell on which she rocked was long and regular. They could wait for daybreak, and he went to the cabin.

Jake brewed coffee, and Bob's supper of bread and canned meat was generous. So far they had not talked much, but when the plates were put away Jake said, "You saw Mary on board the Liverpool boat?"

"Of course. It explains my not rowing off before. She went pluckily."

"If Mary was daunted, you would not know. Well, you put her on board. Was that all?"

"I asked Miss Seaton to marry me. She refused," Bob replied in a quiet voice.

Jake gave him a crooked smile. His look was tired and rather stern, and his face was pinched.

"In the circumstances, if you imagined you could persuade her, you don't know Queen's Mary."

"It looks as if I did not," said Bob. "If you claim you know her better, the strange thing is, you were resigned to let her go. For long I think she planned and fought for you."

"That is so," Jake agreed with a touch of dreary humor. "Well, for one thing I'm not Mary's sort; she ought not to marry a reckless, indulgent wastrel, and I expect she knows. My drawbacks are rather obvious. There's the trouble, Bob."

"But you *were resigned*?" asked Bob, looking at him hard.

"I did not want to marry Mary. All the same, some time since I had ambitions. I, however, got entangled, like a trustful fool, and my recent exploit knocks me out."

"After all, we don't know Mead is dead."

“Ah,” said Jake in a hoarse voice, “if one did but know! Still, if Mead did recover, in one sense it would not help much. You see, I’ve justified Carlyon’s putting me under restraint, and if the doctors hesitated they’d now give him power. I’m moody and queer, Bob, but I’m sane. Yet if the brute can find me my freedom’s gone. His plan was devilishly clever. And I trusted the fellow!”

“He has not yet found you, and I reckon he will not,” said Bob. “Well, to Belfast Lough is not a long run, but Ulster’s British, and the police might watch the Canadian boats. Then we haven’t the documents the steamship companies require for the immigration officers at Quebec.”

Jake nodded. “We mustn’t risk it, and I expect the Free State gang at Dublin would carry out extradition agreements. To steer for Waterford or Cork we must cross the channel traffic, and somebody would spot the boat. I think we’ll take the north channel for the west coast. The Western Sinn Feiners are not the lot to help the English police. But we need some money. How much have you got?”

“There’s my wad,” Bob replied, and put down a few notes.

“Mine is not much larger; I forced Mary to take a sum,” said Jake. “I suppose I must write to my bankers——”

He stopped, and Bob looked up. “You cannot write to your bankers. I have an exchange on London, but Carlyon knows. To ask for an Irish check would put him on our track.”

“By George!” said Jake, and clenched his fist. “It’s awkward, Bob!”

For a few moments they were quiet. Although Bob was not extravagant he had not yet been forced to use much economy, and to know his supplies were cut off was daunting. Moreover, so long as they had money he had hoped they might after a time get on board a cargo boat and bribe the captain to put them on his seamen’s roll. Now he must let it go, and their small capital would soon melt. Presently, however, Jake laughed, and his reckless humor heartened Bob.

“We are up against it, but we are not beaten. Bread and tea are cheap, and we have fishing lines and an otter trawl. In the morning I think we’ll risk sending you for a newspaper; and then we’ll shove off for the Irish coast. Since our program’s fixed, let’s go to bed.”

Bob got into his folding cot. Jake’s laugh had braced him. His pal was a queer fellow and sometimes his mood was dark, but Bob knew his pluck, and as a rule he faced trouble with gay confidence. Then Bob speculated about Mary waiting at Liverpool. His thoughts were gentle and

compassionate; he pictured her brave smile and the small slender figure by the steamer's rail. By and by the picture melted and he was asleep.

In the morning the wind was light. Mist floated about the high rocks and rain beat the deck. The swell was coming from the south, and Bob thought they ought to start, but he waited for some time before he cooked breakfast. He must buy a newspaper, and since he did not want to be conspicuous when he landed, he would sooner the holiday-makers had begun to get about. At length he launched the dinghy, and although the tank was nearly full, put an oak water-breaker on board.

"Heave the cable short and have all ready for hoisting sail," he said, and shoved off.

When he tied up the dinghy two or three fishermen loafed about the harbor wall, and Bob inquired where he could get fresh water. One told him and asked where he was from.

"We left Douglas in the evening," Bob said carelessly. "So long as the weather's fine I have not much use for a harbor. When the tide's full you have got to shift your ropes for the traffic, and then you must stand by when the boat takes the ground. However, if the wind goes south I suppose we ought to run in?"

"That's so," agreed the fisherman. "As soon as the wind shifts she won't ride by the Head."

Bob had studied the chart, and he looked at the sky.

"Southwest, I think! Well, with the wind off the land Ramsey Bay would be a snug spot. . . . Where can I buy some tobacco?"

They directed him to a shop, and Bob, leaving his breaker by a standpipe, started for the town. He had accounted for his landing, and the fishermen had some grounds to imagine he meant to cruise about the island. Anyhow, they did not know his object was to get a newspaper.

After a few minutes he stopped at a small shop. In the window were pipes and boxes of cigarettes, and a notice stating that the shop was a hair-cutting saloon. At the door a board carried two or three newsbills.

"Has your barber arrived?" Bob inquired.

A girl said she did not expect the man for half an hour, and Bob bought some cigarettes. Then he went to the news-counter and picked up the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Yorkshire Post*.

"Looks like a wet day; I'll take another," he remarked carelessly, and picked up the *Glasgow Herald*.

Giving the girl a smile, he pushed the bundle under his oilskin coat and started for the quay. He imagined he had covered his tracks; anyhow, nobody knew he particularly wanted a Scottish newspaper. A policeman in a dripping cape had stopped by the door, and Bob remarked that the day was wet. He wondered whether the fellow entered the shop, but he went leisurely down the street and did not turn his head. When he reached the quay another constable talked to the fishermen. Bob speculated about their conversation, but he must not turn back, and, seizing the breaker, he joined the group.

"I found the tobacco shop. When the rain stops I think the wind will freshen, and we may not go to Ramsey. Suppose we run into the basin, where's a good berth?"

He thought the policeman listened, but for a few moments he talked to the others, and then went carelessly to the ladder. When he got his feet on the steps he called the policeman.

"Perhaps you'd give me the breaker. It's an awkward lift across the top."

The policeman lowered the breaker and Bob went down. When he was on board he bailed out some water and rubbed the wet rowing thwart. He thought the policeman studied him, and it must not look as if he were keen to get away. At length he pushed off and rowed across the harbor with an easy stroke. Jake pulled the dinghy onto the yacht's deck and gave him an inquiring glance.

"Well? Could you get the *Scotsman*?"

"I got the *Herald*. I rather thought the police interested, and I bluffed about our going to Ramsey. Perhaps we ought to start. When we're off we'll look at the newspaper."

The cable was short. Bob broke out and stowed the anchor, and Jake hoisted sail. *Whaup* stole away round the Head and Bob put the newspaper on the cabin table. For five or six minutes he searched the columns, and then he jumped into the cockpit.

"Nothing about Whitriggs," he said. "All the same, I'm not taking chances, and we'll steer for Free State Ireland. Let's hoist the topsail and shove her along."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAY OUT

WHAUP'S slack mainsail flapped, the boom jerked, and the sheet blocks rattled. The wind hardly wrinkled the long steep swell, the boat rolled, and Bob's eyes were dazzled by watching the revolving compass card. Faint reflections from the navigation lights touched the water, and when she plunged, the spray the bows threw up glimmered red and green.

The night was dark and belts of fog drifted about. Sometimes *Whaup* stole through clammy vapor, and sometimes Bob saw dim stars and, for three or four hundred yards, the folded swell. At daybreak, when they passed Rathlin Island, the wind dropped, and the tide and fickle breezes carried them along the Irish coast. Now it was midnight and Malin Head in Donegal was somewhere in front.

There was not much use in Bob's watching the compass, for the boat went hardly fast enough to steer; but he must keep a keen lookout. In a fog Malin Head was an awkward spot. Canadian liners and cargo boats rounded the corner, and if Jake's reckoning was accurate *Whaup* was in their track. Bob was cramped and rather cold, but his watch would not be over for some time, and he began to muse.

Mary was now with Jake's relations, and Jake declared they were kind. All the same, Bob was bothered about her, and he might not get news of her for long. When they made an Irish port he meant to write, but he doubted if Mary ought to reply. Jake and he must vanish and leave no sign to indicate where they had gone.

In the circumstances they dared not write their bankers. If Mead were dead, the police would no doubt get their letters at the office; Carlyon knew with whom they banked. Then, even if Mead recovered, Jake ran a nasty risk. Bob did not know if an English order empowered Carlyon to seize his nephew in Ireland, but they must take no chances. Carlyon was an unscrupulous antagonist and would use all the powers he could get.

Unless one could pay for a ticket or give a bribe one could not get on board a ship. If Bob cabled to Vancouver the old man would send him the sum they needed, but he must present the check at an Irish bank and perhaps get somebody to identify him. Bob frowned and admitted the plan would not

work. For a time they might lurk about the Irish coast, but their money would soon be gone. Then *Whaup* was registered at Lloyd's, and anybody could get particulars about her from the company's yachting list. Bob pondered drearily and admitted he saw no way out.

The boom lurched across the boat and the dew, shaken from the sail, splashed on his oilskin cap. The rudder jarred and swinging blocks rattled noisily. Then for a few moments the boat was steadier, and Bob heard a fresh noise. In the distance a whistle called. The note was deep and musical and was repeated at measured intervals. The steamer was going east, and when she passed she would not be far off. Bob felt about the counter and satisfied himself the horn was where he thought. There was no moon and the stars were pale. He could see for about three hundred yards, and then all was blurred by fog.

The deep whistle got louder, and Bob heard the beat of screws and a throbbing noise like the roar of a distant waterfall. A big mail-boat, nominally slowed down, was steaming for Liverpool, but Bob guessed her speed was fifteen knots an hour. Although in a fog sound is puzzling, it looked as if she would go by a quarter of a mile north.

Then he turned his head. In the haze astern another whistle screamed. The note was high and wailing; a cargo boat's siren, he thought with a frown.

Steering west, she signaled the liner, but when the sonorous blasts rolled across the water nobody might hear *Whaup's* squeaking horn. By and by Jake came from the cabin. He wore a thick pilot jacket and trousers and carried his long boots, for as a rule on board a small yacht one does not pull off one's clothes when one goes to bed.

"The brute woke me up. Where do you think she is?"

"Three hundred yards off, on our starboard bow."

"Some power behind the twin screws, but they'll write half-speed in the log," said Jake. "I suppose the rich grafters she's carrying expect to be in London to-morrow. Speed is for the prosperous mob; the little independent boats must watch out."

"The age is a cooperative age," Bob remarked.

"Exactly," Jake agreed, with a moody laugh. "The crowd has not much use for the individualist, and if you will not use the beaten track you must bear the consequences. Well, I doubt if we have kept the track; but I mustn't philosophize. The other fellow's coming up to port. Where's the paraffin flare?"

Bob told him, and, getting some matches, he pulled on his boots. The fog belt was nearer and the whistles were loud.

"The big fellow's going by, but the other's siren is pretty close astern," said Jake. "Blow your horn, Bob."

Bob blew, and when a swelling triple chord drowned the feeble squeak he swore. He imagined the cargo boat's officers concentrated on the liner and did not know *Whaup* was about. Pointing the horn astern, he pressed the bellows with all his force.

A few moments afterward a high white wave rolled out of the fog. Bob braced his feet against the coaming and shouted Jake to hold on. The advancing wave made a noise like a train, but it broke four or five yards off, and *Whaup* swerved to front the tumbling foam. Her bows lifted, and Jake, holding on by the shrouds, was flung against the mast. She plunged into the trough as if she dropped from a height, and the following roller leaped into the flapping jib. Water rolled along the deck and across the coaming ledge, and one could not see for spray. The boom tossed, sails thrashed, and clattering blocks swung about. The liner, steaming fast, had flung back her bulk of water.

Then Jake shouted, and Bob, turning his head, saw a high pale yellow light. Underneath were glimmering rays of red and green, and the ominous triangle warned him that the steamer and *Whaup* were in line. Jake got a light and leaped on the cabin top, and smoky flame tossed about the fire-pot he waved. The cargo boat's whistle shrieked a long blast, and it looked as if *Whaup's* signal were not yet seen. Then two blasts rang across the swell and a steamer's high dark forecastle pierced the fog.

Whaup, plunging on the wash from the passenger boat, would not steer, and Bob mechanically stooped and pulled the folding dinghy from below the deck. Then he blew hard and threw down the horn. The two blasts indicated that the ship's helm was pulled across, but for some moments she would not swerve much.

Rows of lapping plates shone in the reflections from the paraffin flare. The steamer's bow was over the yacht's stern, and behind the high bridge, pilot-house and funnel vaguely pierced the gloom. That was all Bob saw, for Jake threw the flare overboard and seized the dinghy.

"Help me shove her out!" he gasped.

A shock threw Bob against the coaming. He heard wire shrouds snap; the mast slanted and the deck, on one side, was in the sea. *Whaup* rolled back, and the iron plates, forging ahead, crushed her splintering rail. Then

hot water splashed on board; they were level with the engine-room, and Bob wondered whether they would escape the whirling screw.

The rounded quarter flung *Whaup* off, she rolled in the disturbed wake, and the steamer vanished in the fog. Bob did not know whether he or Jake had lifted the dinghy on deck, but she rested, ready for launching, across the sheet-horse, and they pushed her over. Then, making fast the painter, he tore up a cockpit flooring board. The water was nearly level with the cross-beams, but he had thought to see it higher. After all, the blow was a glancing blow, and the upper planks would suffer most. Although *Whaup* was leaking hard the revolving pump was large and powerful.

Jake plunged through the hatch, and the splash he made was ominous. A light flickered about the cabin, and after a few moments he came back, carrying a lantern.

"Timbers and beams are broken; the deck's started, and the top planks are smashed. For all that, I think she leaks worst about the water-line, and if we got her on the other tack and shifted some ballast we'd lift the damaged side. It's possible we could sail her to Lough Foyle. If she sank, we've got the dinghy——"

A whistle drowned his voice, and in the gloom engines beat. The cargo boat was circling round, looking for the wreck, and a pale blue reflection implied that the captain burned a signal fire. If they shoved off the dinghy and pulled hard they might reach the ship. Bob would sooner try to save the yacht, but he doubted if they could do so, and their money would soon be gone. For a moment or two he hesitated, and then he thought he saw the way out.

"You must let her go, Jake. Londonderry's the nearest port, and if we got there the police might give us up. Besides we could not pay for repairs, and the steamer's *going west*."

"By George!" said Jake, "your plan will work. Although I hate to leave her, I suppose we must, and we'll try to make an artistic job. Since the pump's not going she won't float for long; but my stamp is on the oar and boathook and her name is on the lifebuoy. When they wash up on the beach they'll account for our vanishing. But we must be quick."

They launched the articles, and Bob, picking up the horn and the lantern, jumped on board the dinghy. Soon after they pushed off the fog hid the yacht, and Jake clenched his fist.

"She was a stanch boat and I feel I'm shabby, but if the reckoning comes Carlyon shall pay for all."

Bob said nothing. He sympathized with Jake, and, pulling steadily, he waited for the whistle. So far as he could calculate the cargo boat steamed round the spot. By and by her whistle shrieked close ahead and they saw her vague dark bulk. Bob blew the horn, Jake waved the lantern, and the throbbing engines stopped. The ship forged by, and Bob, pulling the dinghy round, followed her wake.

Four or five minutes afterward he stopped, a few yards from the steamer's side. The iron plates rolled languidly from the water, steadied, and sank back. Dark figures clustered along the rail, and somebody threw a rope. Jake seized the rope. Bob knocked over the lantern and, bracing his boot against the dinghy's gunwale, thrust with all his force. He heard the painted canvas tear at the folding joints and the water gurgle through the rent.

A pillar of blue flame leaped up, and the bridge, wheel-house and high funnel shone. An officer behind the canvas screens held the signal light. Another leaned across the rails.

"Is your boat gone?" he shouted.

"When we left her she was sinking," Jake replied.

"You have got a dinghy, the sea's smooth, and daybreak's in four or five hours. Can't you make the coast?"

"The boat's badly smashed and will soon capsize. Shift your light and look at her!"

The captain motioned to the mate who held the flare, and the light, streaming down the steamer's side, glittered on the water in the bottom of the boat.

"I suppose you must come on board," growled the captain. "Is your dinghy worth hoisting up?"

"She's half-full. If you tried to lift her, her side would fall out. In the meantime she's sinking under us."

The captain shouted, and somebody threw a thick rope. Bob and Jake went up, and when they climbed across the rail a bell rang and the screw splashed noisily.

"The old man wants you. Up the ladder!" said a deck-hand.

They climbed the ladder, and by and by a man called them to a room behind the pilot-house. The captain occupied a couch upon the lockers, a mate leaned against a mahogany berth, and they allowed Bob and Jake to stand. Bob's clothes, like Jake's, were old sea-clothes, his skin was brown, and for a day or two he had not shaved.

“You were fishing?” said the captain. “I expect you were busy with the net and had not hung up your lights!”

“Our net was not down. We carried proper sidelights and blew our horn,” Bob rejoined. “To keep clear was your business, but I reckon all you thought about was the mail-boat.”

“Nobody saw your lights, although we had a lookout at the knightheads and another on the foremast. Anyhow, the company’s not generous and will dispute your claim.”

Bob saw the mate studied them, and he imagined that had he not wrecked the dinghy, the captain would have left them to row for land. Well, *Whaup* was gone, and the important thing was to get across the Atlantic. So long as the Irish coast was near Bob would sooner the others thought them fishermen.

“The boat and tackle cost us a sum we don’t mean to lose, but we’ll talk about our claim when you land us. Now she’s at the bottom we’ve got to earn something. We can steer and splice and use the lead.”

“The quartermasters steer,” the mate remarked with a dry smile. “On board a modern tramp the rigging’s wire and chain. If you can wash decks and use a paint-brush you’ll get your food and a berth in the forecastle. Our lot state they’re union men, and wouldn’t stand for our paying you ten shillings a month.”

“If companies like yours are numerous, good luck to the unions!” said Jake. “Anyhow, since I’d sooner work than starve, we must take the job.” He turned to the captain. “Where are you bound, sir?”

“We cleared for St. Pierre, Miquelon,” the captain replied. “Well, you will find a berth forward, and start in the morning. The cabin steward might give you an old blanket.”

He dismissed them, and when they went down the ladder Jake laughed.

“A hard lot, but we mustn’t grumble. You bluffed them, and she’s for Newfoundland!”

“So far our luck might be worse. When Tory Island’s well astern, I’ll shout,” said Bob.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LIQUOR-RUNNERS

TWO days after the collision Bob carried a tin of soft soap and a bucket to a deckhouse under the steamer's bridge and began to clean the paint. The wind blew fresh from the northwest, long white-topped combers sparkled in the sun, and the ship rolled savagely. For an ocean tramp she was small, and she was not beautiful. Her decks were rusty, slippery iron; her masts were short and furnished with ugly iron tops, from which the long derricks hung. Her funnel was tall and upright, and the thick black smoke of cheap coal, blown down by the strong breeze, smeared the sea.

A deep well, across which water splashed, cut off the high forecastle from the bridge-deck, and Bob saw the bows swing about. She was going light and lifted her screw; her side was high above water and she steered awkwardly. Bob pictured the quartermaster, sweating and swearing, at the wheel.

By and by the mate came along the deck and rubbed his hand across the paint.

"Use the rag. Soap costs something, but rubbing's cheap. Are you all right in the forecastle?"

"No complaints, thank you, sir!"

"I seem to know the formula," the mate remarked, and looked Bob up and down. "In the auxiliary forces they taught you politeness and complaints didn't pay. I suppose your lot were mine-sweepers?"

Bob saw nobody was about and thought it accounted for the mate's stopping. The fellow's voice was ironical.

"Canadian infantry, sir, and the boys didn't grumble. When we thought we were justified we kicked."

"Then you're not Irish fishermen?" said the mate dryly.

"Now we're five hundred miles from Ireland, I admit I'm a Canadian."

"Four hundred and fifty miles from Inishtrahull. The important thing is, we won't go back and land you. The swamped dinghy's carrying you across was queer. When you knew you'd reach us, did you pull out a plug?"

“I did not,” said Bob with a twinkle. “A part of her was canvas and I used my foot.”

The mate nodded. He had an object for his remarks, and he imagined Bob’s candor was not altogether humorous.

“Your plan was expensive, but I expect you reckoned we had not much use for strangers? Well, I own we were not anxious to pick you up. Perhaps you know the load we carry?”

“The hatches are sealed. Although I expect your ballast tanks are full, she floats above her loading marks. Sometimes I read the newspapers. Spirit’s light.”

“That is so,” the mate agreed, and gave Bob a searching glance. “If you hadn’t wrecked your dinghy you might have made the coast. Why did you not try?”

Bob resolved to satisfy the other. Liquor-smuggling was a hazardous business, and if the captain imagined he had planned to get on board the ship it might be awkward.

“Perhaps I ought to put you wise. In a fight we had something to do with, a man was badly hurt, and we pulled out. Since I expect the police are looking for us, we don’t want to land on British soil; but if we could, for example, get ashore in the United States, you could rely on our not bothering you afterwards.”

The mate shrugged. “It might be fixed! Our deck-hands know all about the cargo, but respectable seamen don’t ship with a liquor gang, and we can risk their telling a romantic tale. You are another sort, and we’d sooner not have you on board. Well, I’ll talk to the old man. Carry on with your paint-washing.”

He went off, and Bob imagined he had taken the proper line, and if he and Jake were landed in America, preferably in the dark, all would be content. When he narrated the interview, Jake agreed. Liquor-smuggling, he remarked, was a profitable game, but people began to think the traffic ought to be stopped, and shipowners engaged in the business disliked notoriety. The captain had got two cheap deck-hands, but was, no doubt, willing to get rid of them before they had an opportunity to gather much information. All the same, since the mate seemed to be a good sort, Bob might ask if he would give them a recent newspaper.

The mate was willing, and at night, when the watch went below, they studied the papers by a smoky lamp in the forecastle. The light was not good and the deck heaved. One heard beams and stanchions strain, and felt the skin-plates quiver from the impact of the seas. The condensed damp, shaken

by the rolling from the iron frames, splashed upon the greasy planks and spotted the newspapers. The men were asleep, but for some time Bob scanned the blurred headlines.

At length he threw the newspaper in his bunk and looked at Jake, who got up. Going on deck, they stopped by the ladder on the starboard side. The high forecastle cut the wind, and although some spray blew about, the spot was sheltered.

"Nothing in the *Herald*," Bob remarked.

"I drew the *Scotsman* blank," said Jake, and, curving his hands round a match, lighted his pipe. "It looks as if I did not hit Mead as hard as I thought; but the suspense gets horrible!"

"On the whole, I don't think you have much grounds to be anxious about Mead. If your newspapers are like ours——"

"For the most part they are not," said Jake with a touch of dryness. "There's another thing: Carlyon and the Scottish *fiscal* might perhaps hold up the story for a day or two until the police got to work. At all events, I am anxious. In the circumstances, I'd go for Mead again, but I'd hate to think I knocked the fellow out. In fact, to stand my trial would be some relief."

"The trial's not the worst trouble; we'd see you out in triumph," Bob remarked in a thoughtful voice. "Carlyon's unscrupulous and his wife is sinister. When you made your get-away you were fortunate, but now they cannot seize you they may get power to seize your property."

Jake laughed, a hoarse jarring laugh.

"If they leave me my freedom and let me know Mead's alive, they can take my estate! Since I expect they'll get it, perhaps they'll be satisfied."

Bob said nothing, but he doubted. Jake, at liberty, might prove his saneness and claim all that was his; if he were shut up, restraint and humiliation might work on his nervous temperament until his reason went. Bob was persuaded Mrs. Carlyon reckoned on something like that, and he hated the dangerous, calculating woman.

"We'll soon be called to keep our watch, and I mustn't be selfish," Jake resumed. "Since the fight at Whitriggs I have not slept much, and I'd sooner loaf about the deck than brood in my bunk. You, however, ought to get into yours, and when I have smoked out my pipe I may come down."

Bob went. He knew when to leave Jake alone, but until the bell tolled and they went to their posts he imagined the other walked the slanted deck.

For some days the northwest wind blew fresh and the steamer made slow progress. Then the fog on the Newfoundland banks was thick, and when she reached Miquelon two weeks had gone. Although Bob thought he had

banished the mate's suspicions, he and Jake were not allowed to land, and on the whole he was resigned. To steal ashore was not impossible, but their clothes were seamen's clothes and their money was in English notes. Their leaving the liquor boat would be remarked, and they would be conspicuous on the steamer for Halifax or St. John. Then they must cross lower Quebec to Montreal, and Bob would sooner reach Canada from the United States.

At length the steamer put to sea, and he imagined she steered for a rendezvous on the American coast. At sunset one evening the anchor was let go. The wind was light, but a long swell rolled up from the southwest, and the ship rode uneasily. Her cable jarred, and her masts swung; wire ropes and chain pulleys tossed noisily about. Although one could not see the coast, the cargo-derricks were hoisted, and Bob knew he soon must start on a fresh adventure. But when his watch was kept his sleep was sound: until one was forced there was no use in bothering.

When the bell tolled and the drowsy men went on deck, the night was dark and the wind got fresher. The watch they relieved did not go below; steam blew about the winches, and it looked as if all was ready to hoist the liquor from the holds. Indistinct officers walked about the inclined bridge and a man climbed to the crow's-nest on the foremast.

For a time all was quiet, and they waited drearily. Then engines throbbed in the dark, and Bob, going to the rail, saw leaping foam. The small craft that threw back the wave advanced like a train. Farther off was another white streak. When the boats were near the ship the mate touched Bob.

"You'll help the gang load up and jump on board the first launch to start. The old man will fix it with the bootlegger."

A winch began to rattle and drowned the shouts from the dark. Ropes were thrown and a boat shocked against the steamer's side; but that was all Bob knew, for he was occupied at the hatch. Tarpaulins and planks were pulled off, and a big cargo-lamp threw dazzling reflections across the deck and down the hold.

Straining, gasping men broke out the cases of bottles from the wedged top tier and hooked rope-slings to the chains that came and went. The stacked cases shot up, swung across the light, and vanished. In the wings, where the bright beam did not reach, smoky lanterns blinked. The steamer rolled, the cargo slanted awkwardly, and where cases were pulled out the others slid downhill. A case got adrift and, plunging down the incline, crashed against the angle beams. When they sent it up a pungent smell of liquor floated about the hold.

Sometimes the mates shouted and the deck-hands swore. The night was a good night for smuggling, but the wind was fresh, and if the sea got up one could not lower cargo into the plunging boats. When, for a few moments, the winch stopped, a noise indicated that another boat loaded at the forward hatch.

Bob was breathless and his hands were bruised. A load, swung up during a savage roll, struck the headledge and liquor splashed upon his clothes. He thought he smelt like a distillery, but he grinned. His habits were sober, and since on the whole he agreed with the prohibitionists, his laboriously helping the smugglers was rather a joke. All the same, he must make some effort. The important thing was to get up the liquor while the boats could load, and start for land.

At length the winch stopped, the men sat down in the cargo, and the mate sent Bob and Jake up the ladder. When they got on deck two strangers waited by the cargo-lamp. They were big fellows, and their wet slickers and oilskin caps exaggerated their bulkiness.

"We certainly don't want you, but if you're going you'd better get on board."

"Looks as if nobody wants us," Jake remarked. "Anyhow, so long as you land us we'll be happy to leave you alone."

"Then come on!" said the other, and they went to the gangway.

Some distance below a big motor-boat rolled about, but all one saw was a glimmering light and the load on deck. Jake jumped for a clear space forward; Bob and the bootleggers went down a rope. Somebody pushed off, and the screw began to throb; the bows swung round, the beat of engines swelled to a high note, and she leaped ahead. Bob thought "leap" the proper word, because the bows went up on a white wave and one got a sense of furious speed.

So far as he could distinguish, cabin and cockpit were occupied by cases of liquor, and two or three tiers were lashed on deck. The center of the load was high, and the boat rolled as if she would capsize. Spray beat across the stacked cases, and her stern sank in a trough between two ridges of curling foam.

Bob crawled into a hole by the fellow at the wheel. The man steered by compass, and the glimmer from the binnacle faintly touched his grim wet face. Spray-drops glistened at the brim of his oilskin cap. By and by he looked up.

"Do you know where you are, Bud?"

“I reckon we’re south of Long Island, but since no ships are about, we’re not at Rum Row.”

“Well, you don’t want to guess,” the other remarked meaningly. “When we dump you in the morning you’ll be a long way from the beach, and if you’re wise you won’t talk for the newspapers and Pussyfoot leagues. The gang’s organized, and the boys would get you.”

“That’s all right,” said Bob. “I’m not keen to be famous, and my partner’s modest. Our aim’s to steal across to Canada.”

The bootlegger concentrated on his steering, and by and by the noise of rollers breaking on a sandy point drowned the engine’s note. Soon afterward the water got smoother, and the steersman let the launch go. Bob had thought she went fast before, but now the spray swept aft in clouds and only her tilted bow rose from the white turmoil.

For some time he saw nothing, and then a light flashed in the gloom and the noisy engines slowed. The boat swerved, a vague beach rolled by, and trees began to loom on the other side as if she steered up a tidal creek. Then the engines stopped and she ran gently onto a sloping bank. A plankway went down the slope, and men ran along the boards. Another lot crossed the mud and plunged into the shallow water.

“Get busy,” said the bootlegger, and turned to Bob. “You can’t make your get-away, and we’d like your help.”

CHAPTER XX

THE LANDING

BOB, standing in the water, gave the case he balanced to a man in front, and got his breath. The bootleggers used two gangs, but the plank landing was narrow, and a row of men crossed the sloping mud. Three, near the launch, were in the water, and the cases were passed from hand to hand along the row. Those on board, however, lifted some kegs on deck, and for a few moments the others could rest.

At the top of the bank dark bushes cut the sky, and Bob imagined automobiles waited. One had not long since gone off with a load. The tide had recently left the beach, for the wet mud glimmered, and one could see the men against the faint reflections. The water, ruffled by the wind, did not shine, and twenty yards off melted in the gloom.

Bob's back and arms had begun to ache. He had not before handled liquor cases, but he dared not force the others to wait. His slickers embarrassed him, his skin was wet by sweat, and the water had overflowed the top of his long boots. In the meantime, he must stick to the liquor gang, but he admitted that he would sooner have undertaken another job. His companions' speed implied that United States officers might surprise them at work.

Somebody called him and a keg plunged overboard. The keg floated and, splashing in the water, he pulled it to the gangway and went back for a case, but the next man looked the other way and did not take his load. Then somebody shouted, and Bob heard automobile engines and running feet. The man he waited for vanished, and the launch's screw began to splash. She was going off, and he started up the bank.

At the top a man jumped for him. Bob, perhaps, was not logical, but he stuck to his load and drove the corner of the case against the other's chest. The man staggered, and Bob did not see where he went. His head hurt as if he had got a blow from a club, but he steered for a big car and pushed the case across the back.

People fought about the front of the car and some tried to get on board. The engine rattled as if the clutch was not engaged. Others ran about, but the night was dark and one could not see where they went. The launch's engines

throbbed on a high piercing note. The tide ebbed, and it looked as if the propeller would not pull her off the mud.

Although Bob imagined a United States coast patrol had surprised the smugglers, he was not remarkably interested. The fellow he charged had hit him hard, and he leaned against the car and tried to brace up. Then the wheels revolved, the car rolled ahead, and he sat down slackly in the grass.

Looking about a few moments afterward, he saw nobody, but a noise indicated that the fight raged about the launch. Somewhere in the dark a car hummed and shocked as if it went backward and forward in an entanglement. Then Bob heard Jake shout for him, and he awkwardly got up.

"Come on!" Jake gasped in a breathless voice. "They're fighting for the launch and we'll pull out. Two cars went, but I helped load another. . . . Hello! There she goes!"

Branches cracked and a car rolled out from behind a clump of brush. She lurched across uneven ground, and so far as one could distinguish, carried nobody but the driver. Bob ran for the car; he thought others had heard the noise and followed, and he was resolved to get there first. His head no longer hurt and he jumped on the running-board. Jake collided with him; the others were not far behind, and the driver turned and struck. One hand, however, was occupied, and the next moment Jake was across the jammed door. The fellow saw Bob climb across and he let go the wheel and jumped.

Somebody shouted, a pistol flashed, and Bob saw a man on the running-board at the other side; the ground was boggy and the car did not go fast. He did not know if the fellows were officers, but it was not important. Anyhow, they were not going to get on board. Pulling a small case from against the door, he stood up and hurled his awkward load. The bottles crashed, and it looked as if his aim were bad. Jake knocked the fellow from the board, the car went faster, and the men vanished.

"The thing was ridiculously easy, but we're off," he gasped and laughed —a breathless laugh.

"We don't know where we are going. The main thing's to go," Bob remarked. "I think I see a road of a sort."

Jake turned his wheel, and the car, jolting and rocking, plunged along an uneven lane. Bushes like willows rolled by, and on the other side a streak of thick gloom marked a ditch. To keep the track was Jake's business; Bob's head began to hurt, and he tried to recapture the fight. Perhaps the bootleggers concentrated on getting on board the launch, and had forgotten the car; perhaps the fellow who jumped off had thought Jake a United States

officer. At all events the lot were gone and Jake and Bob sped through the dark with a load of liquor that belonged to the gang. In a sense, their exploit was a joke, but the situation was not altogether humorous. After some time they reached a corner, and Jake stopped the engine.

"I think the road in front's a turnpike."

They looked about. The night was dark and only a tall clump of trees broke the gloom. The country was flat, and but for the wind in the bushes all was quiet. Jake got a light, and curving his hands round the match stood up. Cases of liquor were closely stacked at the back of the car as if the seats had been pulled out. Jake's boot jarred against other cases under the seat in front.

"A noble load and no doubt worth a useful sum. The drawback is it isn't ours," he said, and laughed. "Shall we dump the stuff and drive on? Shall we leave the car and take the woods?"

"I'd like to get farther from the coast, and so long as we use the car I think we'll stick to the goods," said Bob. "Maybe the gang watch the roads and we might run up against their scouts."

"We may run up against the police," Jake remarked. "However, I agree we ought to get as far as possible from the creek. Let's shove on. I suppose you cannot reckon where we are?"

"Our course was west of south, but the compass aft was covered and I couldn't get into the pilot-house," Bob replied. "When I stole a look at the taffrail log she was going nine knots, and I imagine she passed the usual rendezvous off the Highlands, but did not make the Virginia coast. That's all. But let's get off, and maybe you ought to switch on the lights. We don't want folks to guess."

The engine rattled, the car rolled ahead, and they plunged into thin low mist. Here and there fence rails pierced the fog, bushes leaped by, and they jolted noisily across a wooden bridge. For the most part the road was good and Jake let the engine go. Bob got a light for his pipe behind the screen and pondered.

Perhaps it was strange, but he thought he had but once heard a gun. The cars, however, rattled; and the launch's reversed engines and propeller clanged. Two automobiles had got away, and perhaps surprise accounted for the bootleggers' running. Bob, however, did not dwell on this. The car carried a dangerous freight, and to meet the smugglers' confederates might be as awkward as to meet the police. Before daybreak they must hide the car.

After a time, a bright beam sped round a curve and stopped; the car's lights picked out a man standing in the road. Bob's eyes were dazzled, but

he thought the fellow was not in uniform and he waved his arm commandingly. Another held a motorcycle. Jake blew the horn.

"Bootleggers! Shall I bluff, and steer for the man?"

"I think not," said Bob. "They have got a big machine, and one would follow us."

Jake stopped and Bob frowned, for the beam from the motorcycle headlamp touched his face. He imagined the men studied him and he pictured their surprise, but he looked straight in front, and one advanced.

"You have got the first load? Where's Steve?"

"I expect we have got the last," Jake replied. "Steve's in trouble. A patrol was after him when we pulled out."

He narrated his adventures at the creek, and the bootlegger swore.

"The Smithson gang! Jim allowed he'd fixed it for them to watch another spot. Where are the other cars?"

"Search me," said Bob. "Maybe the boys thought the road was stopped and they'd cut out the traps. Although we went right ahead nobody bothered us."

The bootleggers walked back a short distance, and Bob imagined they were not satisfied. Jake's tale was accurate and plausible, but they were strangers and had got away with a valuable load. For a few moments the men talked in low voices, and then one returned to the car.

"We don't know you, and I'll come along. Looks as if Steve has lost some stuff, and I'm going to put this lot where it's safe."

"That's all right. Jump up," Jake agreed. "Perhaps you'd like to drive!"

The man seized the wheel, the other went off on the motorcycle, and the car started. It went fast, and Bob, seeing no room at the back, put a case on the floor and got down by Jake's feet. The wind, eddying round the screen, buffeted his head, water splashed and muddy grit beat his slickers. The load groaned and rattled, and his box jolted about. Trees leaped into the light and vanished, and sometimes the fan-shaped beam pierced the darkness of a wood. Leaves were falling, and a clump of maples touched by the bright reflections shone like crimson flame.

Now and then a wooden homestead glittered in the silver light, and Bob saw barns and orchard trees. He thought he saw a silo tower, and he began to speculate. In Canada, they used corn for ensilage, but when one crossed the boundary the maize cobs ripened in the fields. Yet since he did not know the ripe corn's northern limit, the clue led nowhere. By and by he might find out

in which State he was, and in the meantime he did not particularly want to know. All he wanted was to be rid of the liquor runners.

Bob had not much use for romantic exploits: his business and his inclination were to help the old man at the mill. In fact, when he thought about his adventures, he knew himself ridiculous. He had gone to Whitriggs because his pal had called, but he hated riotous extravagance, and had he not met Mary Seaton, he doubted if he could have stood for Jake's friends.

Well, he had met Mary, and when she acknowledged him her confederate, he knew he would stop. Against the background of folly, greed and riot she shone with a steady gentle light. Mary was kind and pitiful, but she was stanch as steel and thoroughbred. She was all a fine woman ought to be, and yet she was marked by a girl's fresh charm. Well, they had given Jake his freedom, and if his awkward efforts to help his pal had won for him Mary's love, he had his reward. But Mary was shy and elusive; she had not yet promised. . . .

The car lurched into a hole, and Bob, shaken by the jolt, looked in front. Shining grass by the roadside, naked silver branches, red and yellow leaves, and fences rolled back in the speeding light. Sometimes they ran through a dark village, and once or twice distant reflections in the sky indicated factories and railroad yards. Sometimes the car left the turnpike and plowed unevenly along crossing lanes, as if the smugglers' route cut out the towns. All, however, was dark and puzzling, and so long as they went fast, Bob was content.

At length they stopped at a lonely road-house, and the driver told the others to get down. They went into a bleak, shabby room, and it looked as if they were expected, because the lamp was lighted and an untidy woman put food and coffee on the table.

"What are you doing on board the car? Where's Tom?" she asked the driver.

"I expect the cops have got him. They rushed the boys at the landing. I don't know much about it yet. We reckoned our plan was a pretty good one."

The woman frowned, and when she gave Bob a searching glance, her look was hard like Mrs. Carlyon's. Women of Mrs. Carlyon's sort frankly daunted Bob.

"Where'd you find these fellows?" she inquired.

"They'd got the car," said the bootlegger, and narrated his picking up the others.

"You're new," remarked the woman, studying Jake. "How long were you with the boys?"

“Four or five hours, ma’am. We were, so to speak, emergency men,” he replied with a smile. “We got a knock or two, as you will see if you look at my partner’s head.”

“He surely did,” agreed the man, glancing at Bob. “Somebody sicked it to him with a club.”

“So long as it wasn’t a pistol——” said the woman darkly. “Watch out, young fellow, you don’t get a bullet!” Then she turned to the man. “Get busy. You know where you must dump your load by sun-up.”

Bob wanted to know, but he dared not inquire, and they began to eat. The woman brooded and sometimes looked at the driver as if she meant him to see she was not satisfied about her guests. A bulge in the fellow’s coat implied that he carried a pistol, but Bob imagined there was not another man about, and his hosts were embarrassed because they did not want to leave him and Jake alone. All the same he needed food, and he ate his supper. By and by the bootlegger got up and hesitated.

“It’s time you hit the road,” the woman remarked, and added in a meaning voice: “Steve was given away. Watch out!”

They went to the door, and Jake touched Bob, who quietly turned his head and frowned. The light from the house shone across the road, and so far as Bob could see the fields behind the fence were bare and flat. He might risk a shot, but he would sooner try for freedom where they had only to reckon with the driver. If they got away, he imagined the woman would soon put her confederates on their track.

“I’ll take one in front,” said the driver. “The other can perch on the load. Come on. We’ve got to hustle.”

He motioned Jake to the seat next to him, and started the engine. Bob climbed up at the back. He had heard nobody in the road, but the top cases were gone; a woman had obviously moved the stuff when they were at supper. Bob was convinced it was a woman, because had another man been at the house they would not have been allowed to go. He suspected they were now rather prisoners than accomplices of the gang, and when they arrived at the rendezvous they must satisfy somebody they had not given away the plans. To do so might be awkward, but it was not important, since he did not mean to arrive. The car sped furiously through the dark, the cases jolted, bottles clinked, and for a time he concentrated on holding on.

CHAPTER XXI

DAYBREAK

THE car went fast, and Bob, balancing awkwardly on the load, knitted his brows. When the bootlegger stopped he and Jake must not be on board, but he did not yet see a useful plan to get away. He himself might crawl across the back and hazard a jump. The obstacle was the driver hearing him go would seize Jake, and the fellow carried a pistol. Moreover, Bob could not warn Jake to be ready.

He might pick up a case, and if his aim were good knock the fellow from the wheel, but the car would swerve and leave the road. For her to smash and fall over on her passengers would not help. Besides, Bob's methods were not theatrical, and so long as it could be avoided he must not use force. So far the driver had not bothered them, but if he were knocked out they must reckon on the vengeance of the gang. Since the bootleggers ventured to run the liquor across a wide belt of country, they were, no doubt, numerous and well organized.

The trouble was he could not communicate with Jake; Bob knew his friend, and hoped he would not entangle them by some rash experiment. In the meantime the night was going, and whatever plan he tried must be tried soon. When day broke the bootlegger would not be on the road. Bob frowned, but to jump in the dark was not his habit, and he resolved to wait as long as possible.

They began to leave the flat country. The ground was broken and the road went up and down. The sky was lighter and the clumps of trees got very black. They were no longer flat compact masses; one saw the trees were separate and sensed the gaps between. By and by a dark wood rolled down a long incline, and when the car plunged into the gloom the engine's throb was labored. The curving road was steep, but the driver went up on top speed. It looked as if he knew day was breaking and he thought to rush the hill.

The load, however, was heavy, and the hill was long. Bob heard the gears engage, and the head-lamp's beam swung slower round the curves. For a time the car climbed sturdily, and then something began to knock. She struck an awkward grade, the knocking got worse, and the bootlegger swore.

“Sounds as if she’d heated up,” Jake remarked. “What about dumping some cases and relaying the stuff? If you like, we’ll jump off and join you at the top.”

“You’ll stay put,” said the driver. “Don’t get fresh. I reckon she’ll take you up!”

Bob doubted, and by and by the engine clanged and stopped. The bootlegger got down and Bob began to crawl across the load.

“Where are you going?” the other inquired.

“I’m all cramped, and the cases are sharp,” Bob replied. “If you don’t mind, I’ll sit on the running-board.”

“Come on, then; I may want you to hold a light. Until I tell you, don’t get up.”

Bob sat on the board and lighted his pipe. He dared not signal to Jake, but Jake knew they must seize the chance and risk a plunge for freedom. The wood across the belt of grass was thick, and there was no fence. Jake leaned against the cushion as if he were bored and tired. The bootlegger pulled off the bonnet and for two or three minutes was noisily occupied; but when he tried to start, the engine knocked worse than before and stopped when she felt the clutch. Getting down, he stood in the road and clenched his fist.

“Some blamed thing’s het-up and seized.”

“Maybe a piston,” Jake suggested in a languid voice. “A tight ring might jam; but she was sucking oil all right.”

“Sounded like the transmission, but I’m not a mechanic and the drive-gear’s covered.”

“It’s awkward,” said Bob. “The dark is going, and after sun-up we mustn’t be about.”

“Don’t I know?” the driver rejoined.

“Then why don’t you get busy?”

The fellow hesitated. In order to examine the transmission he must pull off the casing, and the casing for the most part was below the car. His grounds for not crawling underneath were obvious. All the same, he must not wait for daylight.

“I reckon you’re not mechanics?” he said after a moment or two.

“We are sailors,” Bob agreed tranquilly. “If she was a steam winch I might make her go, but if you like to get under her I could hold a lamp, anyway.”

The bootlegger said nothing, but Bob pictured his emotions. He was a big fellow, and his pistol, no doubt, was loose.

“Looks as if you wanted somebody to find us in the road!” Jake remarked.

“So long’s you can’t help, you want to quit yapping.”

“You haven’t asked me,” Jake rejoined, and getting down carelessly went to the engine. “Well, I have driven a fast auto and I reckon the trouble’s in the cylinders.”

“The trouble’s in the transmission,” the other declared.

“Oh, well,” said Jake, as if he indulged him, “let’s take a look. Perhaps you can pull off the small lamp, Bob.”

“He can’t,” said the driver. “Don’t you break the wires. Maybe there’s a flash in the box.”

Bob got the electric torch, and Jake looked under the car. The bootlegger stooped, put his hand on the ground and bent his head. Bob braced his foot against the fellow’s back and shoved him strongly under the wheels. Then he touched Jake, sped across the grass and leaped into the wood. A yard or two behind him, Jake smashed through the brush, and when they had gone a short distance he stopped and laughed.

“Go easy, Bob!” he gasped. “I expect the fellow has crawled out, but he won’t come after us.”

Bob agreed and got his breath. All was quiet, and he pictured the bootlegger savagely trying to pierce the gloom. Until the fellow was satisfied his engine would not start, he dared not leave the car. Then Bob looked about. Although the wood was dark, the leaves were falling; one could see the trunks and the underbrush was thin.

“I think we’ll leave the turnpike for the bootleggers, and take the fields,” he said.

They pushed on, and soon afterward climbed a fence and crossed a belt of stubble. The sky had got light and a mile or two off a curving row of trees seemed to follow a brook. When they reached the spot the sun was rising and a bright beam touched the steep bank. There was no wind, and although the morning was fresh, the beam was warm. Bob sat down in the gravel behind a bush.

“We are pretty safe, and if I knew where to get breakfast I wouldn’t grumble much. In the meantime I’m going to take a smoke. Somehow I feel we’ll make B.C. all right.”

“A-a-ll right—the vowels drawn out!” Jake remarked. “At Whitriggs you didn’t *take* a smoke.”

“Maybe so,” said Bob. “I don’t know if the United States immigration bureau watches out for strangers, but I reckon the police and the bootleggers will soon be on my track, and when I make a town to use highbrow English might be rash. My clothes, and yours, are pretty conspicuous.”

“Oh, well,” said Jake, “I’m tired and I think I’ll go to sleep.”

Bob had meant to watch, but when he next looked about, the sun was warm and high. He saw stubble fields, small woods, two or three homesteads, and in the distance a long plume of smoke. Jake, kneeling by the brook, splashed the water on his face. The water was yellow, and the stain and smoke seemed to indicate a factory. It was a glorious morning of Indian summer, and although Bob was hungry his spirits rose. For one thing, Jake’s moodiness was gone: he began to joke. To some extent he was the joyous, careless pal Bob knew before they went to France.

“For a sober, utilitarian citizen, you are a useful man in a rough-house stunt,” Jake remarked. “Your knocking out the fellow with the club was fine, but I don’t altogether see why you jumped into the fight.”

“Perhaps it was queer,” said Bob. “Why did you jump in?”

“My soberness is not remarkable. Then all I wanted was to find you and steal off. Since I was not allowed, I felt somebody ought to pay. It began to look as if folks were resolved not to leave me alone.”

Bob nodded. Jake had not been left alone, and the people he generously trusted had plotted his ruin.

“We have beaten your relations, but we have not yet made Canada, and for a time we must go slow. I expect our long boots and slickers will excite some curiosity, and our money’s a small roll of British notes. I doubt if there are exchange offices in small inland towns, and I don’t see myself inquiring at a bank.”

“The trouble is, we are not in the woods,” Jake remarked with a grin. “You are a first-class scout, but in an eastern state, crossed by railroads and turnpikes and dotted by manufacturing towns, you have not much field for your talents. Anyhow, I think we’ll get a little farther off the road.”

They started, and for four or five hours pushed on, steering west, where possible by small dirt roads. Where they saw a village they took the fields, and when they reached a trunk road they stole across. In the afternoon the sun was hot, and the smoke of a town some distance off stained the sky. Once or twice a freight-train trailed a black plume across the landscape, and automobiles hooted along a turnpike. Homesteads dotted the gentle slopes, and cattle fed in the pastures by a river bank.

The country was well cultivated and populous, and Bob saw he could not much longer lurk about the fields. They needed food and the night would be cold, but when they stopped he wanted to be as far as possible from the coast and the spot where the bootlegger's car broke down. He carried his oilskin coat, but he wore a tarpaulin hat and his long boots galled his feet. Moreover, he was hungry and his side began to hurt. For a time Jake had bantered him; now he frowned and pushed on quietly.

At length a little wood of half-bare trees cut their view. A homestead occupied a neighboring slope and they heard an ax. Bob stopped to locate the sound. In British Columbia he and Jake had sometimes joined the hand-logging gangs, for Seward declared his son must learn to use the ax.

"Somebody is chopping, and I'm willing to earn my supper. Let's go see," said Bob.

They pushed through the wood. On the other side an old man rubbed an ax with a small round stone. A narrow track bordered by fallen trees pierced the wood, and at its end where the chopper was two stumps blocked the mouth of a drain. A thick root was cut halfway through, and on the other side was a large hole.

"Hello!" said Bob. "Are you going to grub that stump?"

The old fellow looked up with some surprise and nodded.

"I allowed I'd lift her before I quit, but I got to go for the cows, and in the morning I want to go in town. You're hefty young fellers; do you know much about stump-grubbing?"

"Sure," said Bob. "We know all there is to it. Gimme that hone, and then you watch me!"

He rubbed the ax and threw Jake the stone.

"She wants grinding, the edge is thick, but you fix the grubhoe and I'll show him."

He swung the ax and the bright blade dropped accurately into the notch. A neat, wedge-shaped chip flew up, the measured strokes got fast and in a few moments the root was cut. Bob cut the next and turned to the old man.

"Pretty good? Shall we go ahead?"

"A dollar and your supper if she's up before dark. I reckon I could shift her, but I got to go for the cows."

"The job's cheap, but I want to eat," said Jake. "Get to it, partner; I'll grub out the dirt."

The farmer went off, and Jake, crawling into the hole, chopped the small roots and raked away the soil. Bob cut the big roots on the surface, and

when Jake enlarged the cave, trimmed a thick branch.

"She ought to go," he said.

Jamming the branch below the stump, for five or six minutes they sweated and strained. Then roots cracked, soil shot up, and the stump rolled out of the hole.

"My share's half a dollar!" Jake remarked with a laugh. "In London, a drink has cost me as large a sum. If industry's rewarded like that, I'm resigned to loaf."

"So long as the light is good, you are going to work," said Bob. "Until the next stump is out, the old fellow can't shove on his drain. When he comes back the stump will be out."

Jake looked at him with surprise and smiled. "For half a dollar, Bob? It's unthinkable!"

"Not at all. I have a notion. . . . But don't talk. Start in!"

Jake grumbled, but he started. He was tired and hungry, his feet were galled, and his back began to hurt. Bob's side hurt, but he used the grubhoe sturdily and when dusk fell and the farmer came back two stumps were up.

"You certainly can chop," said the old fellow. "Well, come on. I expect supper's fixed."

"We'll take two dollars," Jake remarked, and the farmer smiled.

"No, sir. You agreed for a dollar, but I like a square deal. I'll stand for a dollar and a half, and you can sleep in the barn."

Bob pushed Jake and they started for the house.

CHAPTER XXII

JAKE TAKES A JOB

DUSK was falling and a kerosene lamp burned in the farm kitchen. The room was large, but the furniture was cheap, and Bob imagined his host's farming was not profitable; it looked as if they parsimoniously cultivated worked-out soil. The woman who put the plates on the table was old. Her shoulders were bent and her face was lined, but the glance she gave Bob and Jake was keen. She, however, said nothing, and, motioning to them to fetch chairs, began to serve the meal.

For a time Bob indulged his appetite. The food and coffee were good, and the woman saw he was supplied. Nobody talked, and after the elaborate service and noisy conversation that marked dinner at Whitriggs, supper at the farm was homelike. His hosts ate in order that they might work, and he reflected that he sprang from stock like theirs. Jake did not, and sometimes Bob glanced at him with dry amusement. Jake ate because he had not for a long time had a proper meal; Bob imagined he did not approve the bill-of-fare.

By and by Bob's glance rested on a pictorial advertisement. The drawing was good. A team of horses plodded across a long slope, and the sun touched their smooth backs and the bright paint on a big plow; the steel moldboard shone in the brown soil. Across the top was printed, "You want the best. Use Cromwell Company's implements."

The light was not very good, and Bob was forced to look hard at the letters underneath before he distinguished "Mark Sears, Whatcom, Penn."

At last he thought he knew in which state he was, but he turned to the farmer.

"I like your picture. Do you trade with Sears?"

"In the morning I must go in town to see him," the other replied. "The horse ain't fast and I can't be back for dinner. I'd ruther stop and get on with the ditch."

Bob touched Jake. They were in Pennsylvania and the market-town was not far off. The farmer pondered, looked at his wife, and resumed:

"You can sleep in the barn and I don't know as you need pull out to-morrow. Nothing much is doing and you mightn't hit a job. . . . Well, the wet patch behind the wood has bothered me for some time, and I want to cut that drain before she freezes up. You got good boots for the mud, and if you can dig as well as you can chop I reckon——"

His offer was not generous, and Bob noticed Jake's smile, but he calculated. He was some distance from the coast, and if the police and the bootleggers were on his track they would not think to find him engaged at a farm. Moreover, he must get some American money. He admitted that his caution was perhaps exaggerated and he might hide when nobody pursued, but for his friend's sake he wanted to be safe.

"We might hit a softer job, but if you will stand for two cheap hats when you go to town, we'll stay. Then we want hiking boots and we take a standard size."

"When we reckon up you can buy them," the farmer rejoined. "I'll stand for the hats, and you'll get to it in the morning. Now you can set a while by the fire. I'm going to take a smoke."

He began to cut a black tobacco plug, and Jake pulled out his pouch, and then saw Bob's glance. When *Whaup* went down they had carried off a sealed tin, but the tobacco was not the stuff strolling laborers used. Bob lighted his pipe. He meant to stay until the ditch was cut, and he wanted to find out about the bootleggers.

"We were at sea for some time, and our home's out West," he said. "What are you doing about prohibition? I suppose liquor comes in from the coast?"

"Some towns are bone dry and some are not," the farmer replied.

"What about your town? Maybe something depends on your wad!"

The woman gave Bob a keen, suspicious glance.

"Are you pining for a drink, young man?"

"I am not, ma'am. I haven't much use for liquor. The newspapers print queer stories, and I was kind of curious——"

"Ailly's a hundred-per-cent. Pussyfoot," the farmer remarked with a twinkle. "Well, I'm certainly not pining, but if I put up the cash I reckon I could get a drink; I reckon I could get as much's I want."

"Then you better get it soon," his wife rejoined. "The Women's League can take a dare, and we're out for a clean city and decent homes. The saloon gang and the bootleggers can't buy us. Talk about a man's grit—you make me tired. You claim you want a sober country and you voted dry, but you'll

stand for the grafters and law-breakers holding up your town. Well, we're starting in for a clean sweep. You watch us!"

"Ailly gets het-up," the farmer apologized. "She means well, but she don't discriminate. When I went in town, maybe I'd take my schooner and talk to the boys; but if it's going to help my country, why I'll cut out my beer."

The woman gave him an approving nod and turned to Bob.

"Now you get us! As far's Tom goes, he's plumb right, but he stops before he's through, and the women are going all the way. When the man starts tanking we know we meet the bill. We got 'most all straight folks behind us, and in some states we control the vote. Our program's full-time factories, good homes, and empty jails, and I want to see the honest American who will call us down. Anyhow, our country's ours, and we won't stand for no foreigners' debauching it to help them get rich——"

She picked up some sewing. The color melted from her face, but her look was stern when she resumed: "You are strangers; you don't know us. If you reckon to hide up and use this homestead for the rum interest, trouble's coming to you."

Bob pondered. The woman watched, and he dared not glance at Jake. On the whole, he liked his grim hostess, and her talk moved him. After all, his ancestors were New England Puritans. The important thing, however, was, she implied that the bootleggers' friends were numerous and perhaps influential. Then, she was not satisfied about him and Jake. Bob felt rather shabby because he dared not be frank.

"If I were running liquor, ma'am, I'd have hid up in town," he said. "Well, you certainly don't know us, but I'd like you to believe our aim's to have nothing to do with the rum gang. Soon as we can buy a ticket we pull out for the West."

"When the ditch is cut you'll get your pay," said the woman, and began to sew.

For a time the farmer talked about something else, and then Bob and Jake got up. The woman gave them blankets and a rug.

"Breakfast's at sun-up. I'll take your pipes and matches," she said.

They went to the barn and made their beds in peppermint-scented hay.

"Madame's a fanatic, and I imagine she suspects us," Jake remarked. "For all that, so long as she scares off our recent friends we mustn't grumble; I admit I'd sooner they did not look us up. Somebody gave away their plans, and when the motor scout stopped us we were going off with a useful load. The boys, of course, cannot allow hijackers to rob them."

“Your argument is sound,” Bob agreed in a drowsy voice. “Their boss probably knows we had nothing to do with it, but if he is not in jail I expect he’s hiding. However, I imagine so long as Madame’s at the farm the gang will leave us alone.”

He sank in the soft hay, the smell of the peppermint was soothing, and he was soon asleep.

In the morning he and Jake got to work. The felled trees along the chopped line were not very large, but they must chop the branches and help the horse to haul out the trunks. The job was a job for two horses, but the farmer had taken the other, and at soft spots they were forced to hand-spike the logs across the sinking skids. Bob, however, was a famous lumberman’s son, and they had used ax and cant-pole on the giant firs of the Pacific Slope. Then on board ship their hands and muscles had got hard, and although their backs ached, at sunset the farmer admitted he was satisfied.

For two or three days they labored, and then Bob one morning stopped the old man.

“I suppose there’s a Western Union office in town? I want to send a telegram.”

“The office is at the depot. How’ll you get there?”

“Unless you loan me your horse I must hike. Anyhow, I’m some dollars ahead, and I’d like some money.”

“You can’t have the horse,” said the old man firmly. “I might put up two or three dollars, but I ruther you stayed with the job.”

For a minute or two they disputed, and Bob doubted if the sum he got would see him through. Until the ditch was cut his employer did not mean to let him go, and since he did not want to excite fresh suspicion he was forced to agree.

The morning was fresh and he started at a good pace. He had pulled off his seaman’s jersey, and his new hat was the type supplied by country-town stores; but when one walks far, sea-boots are awkward, and after two hours on a stony turnpike Bob had had enough.

When he reached the town it did not look as if his arrival interested the citizens, and going to the telegraph office he inquired about the rates and weighed the words he meant to use. Cablegrams were expensive, and he was resolved he would not yet try to exchange his British notes. Although the message for Mary was short, he thought it struck a triumphant note. Perhaps one ought not to boast, but he wanted Mary to know he had conquered.

“*Made it all right—Bob.*”

The address, however, was long and could not be cut, and when Bob wrote the telegram for his father and reckoned the cost he frowned. The American bills he carried would not pay for both messages. Jake and he needed new clothes, and particularly walking boots. Moreover, they ought as soon as possible to start for the West. So long as they were at the farm he imagined they ran some risk, but if he telegraphed his father, money for clothes and tickets would arrive.

Bob wanted to telegraph, but he pictured Mary's anxious speculation. She was disturbed about Jake; Bob rather hoped she was, to some extent, anxious about him. Anyhow, to know they had reached the United States would be something, and he gave the cablegram to the operator. Jake and he must wait for their tickets.

When the message had been sent he took the road. He knew himself conspicuous, but so long as the stores and houses bordered the sidewalk he did not go fast. Where the buildings stopped and he faced open country he wondered whether he ought not to take a side road and afterward return to the turnpike. Now he thought about it, two or three people had given him curious glances; but he must not exaggerate, and he pushed ahead.

He was hungry and his boots galled his feet. His stained sea-clothes were thick, and when one walked steadily the afternoon was hot. Had he cut a word from the long address in the cablegram he might have got a meal, but he was glad he had not risked it. To get his message would banish Mary's doubts, and for two or three miles he pictured her satisfaction and helped his advance by fragments of cheerful song. By and by, however, his singing stopped, and he went quietly. His brows were knit, and when his boots struck a stone he swore. To be annoyed was perhaps ridiculous. All that bothered him was an inch or two of abraded skin, but he was flesh and blood, and to use his galled foot demanded some resolution.

The road was hard and straight. Sometimes an automobile rolled by, but nobody invited Bob to get up. To look in front was dreary, and his pace got slow. Yet the farm was some distance off; the sun was going down the sky and the shadows were long. Bob wanted to stop and rest his foot, but to risk his supper was unthinkable, and he stubbornly labored on.

CHAPTER XXIII

A USEFUL FRIEND

BOB, limping up the path to the homestead, set his mouth, for the path was stony and his foot was very sore. The sun was low, but dark would not fall for half an hour, and his employer would expect him to get to work. Bob wanted to sit down and pull off his tormenting boots.

When he was near the house the woman called him, and he advanced awkwardly. At the farm Mrs. Merril ruled, and he imagined her annoyed because he had not returned before. Perhaps the situation was humorous, but until he was ready to go he must not offend his hosts. Merril was chopping in the wood, and Jake threw muddy soil from the drain. Bob admitted he was not keen to join them. At the kitchen door he stopped, and Mrs. Merril told him to go in.

"Well, young man, you didn't hustle!" she remarked. "Did you get a drink in town?"

"I did not," said Bob. "I didn't get my dinner. The telegraph company took my wad."

"Looks as if you made the wires hum. But set down and take a rest."

"Maybe I ought to get to work," said Bob with surprise.

"Leave your partner do it. To sweat won't hurt him much. I don't know if he likes his job, but he's moved some dirt. Well, why don't you fetch a chair?"

Bob sat down. He had not thought to find Mrs. Merril humorous, and he wondered whether his excursion had excited her curiosity, but her eyes twinkled and her glance was kind.

"You walked lame," she resumed. "Your boots ain't hiking boots. You better pull them off."

Bob hesitated, but to be fastidious was not his cue, and Mrs. Merril noted a red stain on his stocking.

"When your skin is broke, dyed wool is pison," she remarked. "You want to get that stocking off. The kettle's biling, and we'll soon fix your foot."

“If you don’t mind, ma’am, I’ll fix it in the barn,” Bob said firmly, and when she gave him some hot water, and a clean rag and a bottle of balsam he went off.

To bathe his chafed skin was soothing, but after a few minutes he limped back to the kitchen, and Mrs. Merril gave him old carpet slippers.

“They’re easy and they was my son’s. Well, you certainly were extravagant! Was you wiring home?”

“I was not,” Bob replied, and resolved to be frank, for the woman was obviously not as hard as he had thought. “I wanted to wire home, but when I’d sent another message I was broke.”

“Then your message went a long ways? I guess your business was important!”

“Until I get home I have no business, ma’am.”

Mrs. Merril smiled. Her sternness had vanished, and Bob knew her human.

“If it wasn’t business, the wire was for a girl. You reckoned she was bothered about you?”

“She was anxious for my partner, but I hoped she would like to know where I was,” Bob replied in a quiet voice.

“Well, Tom might have put up another two or three dollars, but I stopped him. Now I’m sorry.”

“I don’t grumble, ma’am,” said Bob. “You don’t know us, and your husband aims for us to finish the ditch. Anyhow, you gave us blankets and you gave me balsam for my foot. Then to get these soft shoes was some relief.”

Mrs. Merril’s eyes twinkled, and her look was humorously apologetic.

“When you came along I reckoned you were hobos; and you started Tom to talk about the bootleggers. Well, I wasn’t very bright, and sometimes I’m mean, but the farm’s poor, and when I think about the liquor gang I get mad. Besides, you allowed your home was West, but you’re all a Northerner.”

“I didn’t cheat you, ma’am. The thing is queer. My home is on the Pacific Slope, but our folks lived back in a northern state, and my father was the first to quit.”

“We came south,” said Mrs. Merril. “Our farm was in Vermont, where the clear rivers run and the big pines grow. My country, the best there is, but our patch was in the rocks, and you know what the boys say—all the seed the land will raise you can shoot across the stones with a scatter gun. Well,

we came south, but we ain't got much ahead. Tom can't pay for help, and Jim he went to France——"

She turned and indicated a portrait on the wall. The young man wore United States field uniform. He was an athletic young fellow and his look was frank.

"Sometimes I think the best stayed in France," Bob remarked quietly.

"You were a soldier—Pershing's lot?"

"Sam Hughes' was mine."

"Then you went soon. Your folks was lucky because you got back; my boy did not," said the woman, and brooded for a time. Then she went on in a gentle voice: "I knew you was a soldier, and I allow Jim would have liked me to give you his soft shoes. At first he couldn't stand for the army boots, and I used to think about him—packing a hundred pounds along them roads in France. There was a picture in the *Sentinel*—thin high poplars, the boys with tin hats, and the straight turnpike running on until it hit the sky. Maybe Jim's feet hurt, and so long's yours are sore you can have his shoes. . . . But I must get busy. Tom will want his supper."

She occupied herself at the stove, and Bob mused. He thought she labored at the farm because only by effort and frugality could she live, but all joy in work was gone. When Jim did not come back from France, hope and ambition went. Yet for the boy's sake Bob thought her his friend.

Four or five days afterward he knew his supposition accurate. The farmer had gone to a neighbor's, but Mrs. Merril was at home, and Bob swung his grubhoe in the muddy ditch. His business was to cut the roots that crossed the cleared line and break loose the soil they bound, and Jake, advancing behind him, used the shovel. Jake frankly owned he did not like his job. The trench was three or four feet deep, and at the bottom the soil was wet. In the cramped space one could not get a proper swing, and the mud that slipped from the shovel fell back on one's head. The roots Bob cut were thick, and by and by a stone nicked the curved hoe's edge. Bob climbed from the ditch and pulled out a small watch-shaped hone.

"She ought to be ground, but perhaps I can rub out the notch," he said. "You can let up for a few minutes."

Sitting on a maple log, he got his breath. They had pushed the drain some distance into the wood, but the leaves were nearly gone and the underbrush was short. Although the light was going Bob could see across the fields, but he doubted if anybody outside the wood could see the end of the ditch. Since he got breakfast he had been strenuously occupied, and for a minute or two he meant to relax.

The evening was calm and cold. Light mist began to float about the low ground, but the slopes were sharp against the tranquil sky, and Bob thought by morning frost would cut the last red leaves. On the sunny Pacific Slope, however, the warm Chinook blew; the thick woods called, and he wanted to be at home.

"I have not had dry clothes for a week," said Jake. "I feel as if my back were crooked for good, and the mud's got under my skin. When do you think we might start?"

"When we can buy the clothes we need and a ticket for a point on the Chicago road. You agreed we oughtn't to go by Montreal, and I'd sooner not try Detroit. I don't want to face the Customs and the Immigration Bureau."

"Oh, well, I suppose for my sake you're cautious, and perhaps you're justified. But you haven't yet telegraphed your father, and I doubt if we need be disturbed about the liquor gang."

"It's possible," Bob agreed. "All the same, somebody did give away their plans. Then they're up against informers, and if hijackers steal their goods they can't ask for police help. In fact they're forced to be revengeful ——"

He stopped. Two men crossed a neighboring field as if they steered for the homestead, but Bob thought their not coming by the wagon road significant. Then one turned his head and stopped, as if he noticed the ditch. Bob touched Jake.

"Come on out! Bring your shovel and get behind the brush. I think we'll push through the wood."

Carrying their tools and treading cautiously, they stole into the gloom and reached the field on the other side. All was quiet, but Bob was not satisfied, and his heart beat. Whispering to Jake to go noiselessly, he followed the edge of the wood and stopped at a corner that commanded the homestead.

For some time he did not see the men, but by and by they crossed a hollow where the mist was thick, and on the higher ground took the path to the house. They had not gone straight, and Bob thought he could account for their stopping.

"You are a bully scout," said Jake. "Looks as if the fellows expected to find us at the ditch! What are we going to do about it?"

"In the meantime we'll wait," said Bob.

The light was getting faint, but he saw Mrs. Merril come to the kitchen door and for a minute or two face the strangers. Then they went off and

vanished in the mist, but Bob did not think they made for the wagon-road. Jake's look got very grim.

"I don't imagine they wanted a job," he said. "Mrs. Merril has not much grounds to trust us."

"She's stanch," said Bob. "Then she's pretty smart, and she hates bootleggers. I think the fellows are bootleggers, and when I went to town they got on my track."

Jake clenched his fist. "Very well! If I'm forced I'm willing to fight."

"To begin with, we'll try another plan. My notion is, they mean to see if we are about this side of the wood. I think we'll go back to the spot where they stopped before."

They followed the trench, and when they reached the other end got behind two trees and waited. Bob's grubhoe blade was keen, but on the whole he thought he would not be forced to use the tool. Although the others no doubt carried pistols, he imagined their object was to discover if he and Jake were at the farm. Since Mrs. Merril would know them another time, they would not risk a shot. The argument was logical, but Bob was bothered by some doubts.

The wood got darker and a window at the homestead shone. A light breeze sprang up, and sometimes thin branches shook and dead leaves rustled. That was all, however, and the quietness disturbed Bob. He pictured his antagonists crawling noiselessly through the wood. At last he imagined they were satisfied that he was not about, and, beckoning Jake, he stole across the dark fields to the house.

At the door he hesitated, but Mrs. Merril called and he went in. He thought she gave him a queer look.

"You didn't come for supper. Maybe you saw the men who were at the house?"

"That is so, ma'am," said Jake. "I suppose they asked for us?"

"Then you know them?"

Bob saw he must trust the woman. To leave a clue for the police might be dangerous, but something must be risked.

"We certainly don't know them; but we know they're not our friends, and we have some notion what they want."

"Very well. They didn't ask for you. They allowed they wanted a job, and when they saw the ditch they calculated we might hire them up. All the same, when they came along *one looked into the barn*."

Jake smiled. “I expect you looked in afterwards and saw our blankets were on the corn chest behind the mower! But the brutes were smart. They reckoned on your stating you had engaged two men. Well, I don’t think you let us down.”

For a moment or two Mrs. Merril was quiet. Jake’s smile was attractive, and when he was not moody, his careless charm was marked. For all that, Bob waited with keen suspense. Mrs. Merril was a fanatic prohibitionist.

“I sure don’t know why I trust you, but since we hired you you’ve earned all the money you got, and that’s something. Anyhow, I felt I’d hate to give you away. I told the boys the old man could cut the ditch and we weren’t hiring help. When they didn’t go I said we’d no use for hobos and I’d loose the dog.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” said Jake. “We knew you would see us out.”

Mrs. Merril gave him a searching glance.

“Well, I guess the men were bootleggers, and they might come back. You can chop, but grubbing trees and ditching is not your job. Who are you? And why did you stop with us?”

Bob looked at Jake, and when the other nodded agreement he, as far as possible, satisfied the woman’s curiosity. By and by wheels rattled on the stones, and Mrs. Merril got up and threw some coal into the stove.

“Tom has got to know,” she said. “When supper’s through we’ll talk about it again.”

CHAPTER XXIV

BOB PUSHES ON

THE farmer put his horse in the stable, and Mrs. Merril served supper. By and by she began to talk about the strangers' visit, and Bob and Jake again narrated their exploits. At first Merril was disturbed, but when Bob frankly replied to his questions his look got resolute.

"I'd ruther you had hired up at another farm," he said. "All the same, you took my job; I allow you have made good, and since Ailly says so I got to see you through. Then I don't stand for being bullied by no blame liquor gang."

"We feel like that," Jake remarked, and turned to Bob. "We haven't yet made good, partner!"

Bob nodded, but looked at Merril.

"You are keen to finish the ditch?"

"I certainly am. We'll have frost by morning, and she'll soon freeze up good and hard. I don't keep a hired man and when the thaw comes I got to hustle around at other jobs."

"Very well," said Bob. "We undertook to cut the ditch, and we mean to stay with it."

"You got some gall!" Merril remarked; but Mrs. Merril motioned to him to be quiet.

"We don't want you to get hurt," she said to Bob. "You ought to quit."

"On the whole, I reckon we don't run much risk," Bob replied in a thoughtful voice. "To begin with, we don't know the men are bootleggers, but I suppose they are. They did not find out we were at the farm, and so long as you or Mr. Merril were around they didn't dare pull a gun. All the same, I don't think they mean us to get away, and since they have looked you up to stop for a few days might put them off the track. The trouble will begin when we try to get on board the train."

"My pal argues like a lawyer," Jake observed. "Anyhow, until the ditch is cut we are going to stay. For one thing, we want hiking boots and store clothes. How much do you calculate the clothes would cost?"

Merril told him, and Jake smiled.

"We can't buy them. What are you going to do about it, Bob?"

Bob pulled out a small roll of paper money and turned to his hosts.

"These are British treasury notes. I expect your bank would take them. If you reckoned each worth three dollars you'd be pretty safe, but until we quit we'd rather you didn't change the notes."

"You ought to do it, Tom," said Mrs. Merril.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bob. "We'd like Mr. Merril to go to town at our cost and buy us some boots. We use a standard size."

"I'll do it," the farmer agreed. "Gimme the bills. I'll hold them awhile, but when I come back from town you'll get the dollars."

Bob gave him the roll, but Mrs. Merril hesitated.

"If you think you better quit, we don't want to keep you so's you can finish the ditch."

"I know, ma'am," said Bob. "We mean to stay because we think it the proper plan."

"Well, when you do start Tom will see you to town. A train goes out evenings, and you want to get on board in the dark."

Bob rather doubted, but soon afterward he and Jake went off to the barn. When they got there Jake laughed.

"It looks as if we meant to blaze our trail across the state. Our landing was pretty conspicuous, and I imagine American country banks do not get English notes. Then our frugal employer buys two pairs of boots of a size he does not use. The American police are not fools. Suppose they look up our hosts?"

"The woman's our friend and her husband's stanch," said Bob. "Somehow I know these folk. Not long since mine were very much their sort. You can't bully them and they don't give away their friends."

"Oh, well," Jake remarked, smiling, "when I'm up against it and things are awkward, I admit I like the type."

In the morning they resumed their labors, and for some days all went quietly. Then Bob cut the last sod and the water from the swamp began to flow along the trench. The afternoon was cold, and when they carried their tools home through the wood, frost touched the dead leaves.

"She's running!" said Merril triumphantly. "In two or three days I'd not have cut another foot. Well, you helped me get there, and I'm kind of sorry you can't stay. Mrs. Merril allows the homestead will be lonesome when you are gone."

They put the tools in the barn and Bob, with much satisfaction, pulled off his long boots.

"Some time you may dig another ditch, and if you'd like our boots they're yours. So long as you don't hike far, I think they're pretty good; but if you use mine, don't leave Jake's about."

"I'll hide them up. But you're not going to want them?"

Bob laughed, and then his look got thoughtful.

"They are done with and all they stand for. I like to swing the ax and feel my muscles firm. I like Mrs. Merril's suppers and to sleep in the hay, but my proper job is waiting and I must take hold. I doubt if I'll grub another stump, and I don't know but I'm sorry."

"I am not," said Jake with a twinkle. "A gun's my tool, and if I can go hunting sometimes I'll be resigned to put up the ax. All the same, we are not anxious to leave you, sir."

The old man gave him a quiet glance.

"You are a hefty young fellow and you got a way that makes folk like you, but you want to stick to your partner. I reckon he'll steer you where you ought to go."

"It looks as if you had weighed us accurately," Jake agreed. "Perhaps I'm fortunate, because Bob's the sort to carry an awkward load."

Mrs. Merril cooked supper and Merril went for a neighbor's rig. The meal was rather a melancholy function, and when it was over Mrs. Merril gave the young men her hand.

"Tom will see you on the train, and maybe when you get home you'll write to us. I'd like to know you made it," she said.

"All aboard!" shouted Merril, and the borrowed horses began to kick.

He used the whip; the rig jolted and the wheels rattled on the stones. Bob turned and waved his hat, and the woman at the kitchen door waved her hand. Then the homestead vanished behind the trees and he looked in front. He and Jake had money enough to carry them some distance, and if their luck were good in an hour or two they would take the road for the West.

Soon after they reached the turnpike, dusk began to fall. Cowbells chimed across the shadowy fields; sometimes shouts and a dog's bark indicated that the cattle were coming home. Lights burned in homestead kitchens, lanterns flickered about wooden barns, and now and then an automobile's head-lamps searched the road. Where all one saw implied sober industry, to look for romantic adventure was perhaps extravagant, but Bob did not know, and he resolved to be watchful.

“How far are we from town?” he inquired, and when Merril told him, resumed: “We want time to buy some clothes, and then I’d like to make the depot just before the train comes in.”

Merril nodded, and they went slower. In front, reflections touched the sky, lights began to twinkle, and the automobiles got numerous. When they drove into the town the farmer left his team at a livery stable, but he carried his heavy whip and went with Bob to a clothing-store. Bob pulled out his watch. If the train were on time it would start in twenty minutes, and he did not want more.

Not to be stopped on the road was something, but the sidewalks were crowded, and the bootleggers would probably soon get to know Merril and two strangers had arrived. Then, if they thought the news important, they might go for their friends. Unless, however, they could reckon on strong support, Bob imagined they would hesitate to meddle with him. To see the busy stores and sober, well-dressed citizens was comforting; folks like these would not stand for exploits typical of an old-time Western cattle-town.

The storekeeper was able to supply clothes of a useful size, and wrapped up the goods. Then the party went to the station a minute or two before train time.

“How’s she running?” Bob inquired.

“Pretty good; not more’n five minutes late. Track number three,” the railroad-hand replied.

Bob frowned. To wait might be awkward, and track three was farthest from the office lights. He did not know if Merril’s going with them was an advantage, but the farmer’s whip might be useful, and he bought tickets for a town some distance along the line. Then he went to the inquiry desk.

“Have you got a time-table for the eastern sections?” he asked.

The girl gave him a folding time-table and map, and for a few minutes he waited by the office.

“If the gang mean to stop us, I expect they’ll try it when the train runs in,” he said. “When everybody’s occupied a scuffle might not be remarked, and their plan’s no doubt to rush us on board an automobile.”

Jake nodded and looked about. Passengers carrying luggage began to cross the tracks, and five or six cars waited in the gloom on the other side. A group walked up and down by a big lamp, but nobody came near Bob’s party. So far as Jake could see, he had not much grounds to be disturbed, but he set his mouth and his heart beat.

A whistle screamed and a bright beam swung round a curve. The train rolled into the station, and when the bell stopped a pump began to throb.

Baggage trucks rattled about and a hose gang noisily filled the car water-tanks. Passengers hurried along the line, and Bob, touching Jake, crossed the rails. Merril, carrying the whip, was a few yards behind.

In front of a car-vestibule they stopped. A man, embarrassed by a large bag, was on the steps, and a woman with two children blocked his way. Two or three other people waited by the track, and when Bob's party stopped a fresh group arrived.

"We got you, old son!" said somebody in a jocular voice.

Bob heard a man grumble, as if he were pushed from the steps. Imagining, if he waited, his arms would be jammed, he turned and stepped swiftly back. A big fellow in front of him laughed.

"Reckoned you'd cut out your friends, but you're not going yet! The boys want you. Come on up-town!"

The fellow's remarks were obviously for the passengers. He was not alone, and he wanted it to look as if the man he seized were carried off for a joke. Bob swung forward on his left foot, and, using all his weight, struck the other's jaw. His knuckles jarred on hard bone, and the man reeled back. Merril's whip cracked like a pistol shot, and Bob was surrounded by a pushing, struggling mob.

"Quit fooling and lemme get on board!" a passenger shouted, and shoved his suitcase against a big fellow's chest.

"Leave the boys alone; get off my feet!" said another. "Sick it to him, Bud!"

Bob thought the men saw the fight was not a joke, but the offices were across the tracks, and nobody there was interested. In the meantime he was tensely occupied. Two antagonists pressed him hard, and although they were embarrassed by the angry passengers, he knew they meant to disable him and hustle him across the line to a waiting car. He must fight for his freedom, and, grappling one fellow, he fell against the steps.

Somebody shouted that the train was starting, and Bob saw the colored porter on a step above him.

"You going, suh?" said the porter and, leaning down, seized Bob's arm.

Bob, holding on by the platform rail, used his boot. Jake threw a man against the wheels and jumped for the step. The car lurched, the colored porter pulled Bob to the platform, and two or three others leaped off the train. Lights began to roll by, and the locomotive's snorts drowned the clanging of the bell.

"Your friends was suttinly fresh, suh," remarked the porter.

“It looks like that. Something’s leaking,” Bob agreed, and gave him a bill. Then he turned to Jake. “Where are our new clothes?”

“I got your parcel,” the porter replied. “When the boys started rough-housing, your friend fired the stuff on board.”

Bob took the parcel, Jake pushed him through the vestibule, and then stopped by a lamp and laughed.

“Had the light been better, I expect the fellow would not have waited for his tip. Anyhow, the water-tanks are full and we may find some soap. What about putting on our new clothes?”

“I think we’ll wait,” said Bob, and when he had removed the stains of conflict he went to the smoking-compartment and studied the railroad folder.

CHAPTER XXV

PROGRESS

JAKE returned to the car platform and for a few minutes leaned against the rails. He had got a knock or two, but the cold water in the freshly filled tanks had braced him and he did not feel much the worse for the fight to reach the steps.

The train ran smoothly; the rail-joints clicked with a monotonous rhythm and the steady roll of wheels was soothing. When he looked back the reflections from the town and railroad yards got faint. In front, tossing sparks, flung into the dark, marked the locomotive's swift advance.

Jake thrilled. They had beaten the bootleggers, and for some distance the road to the West was open. So far their luck was good, but Jake imagined Bob was not yet satisfied. In fact, until they reached the mill-house he would not be satisfied. Well, Bob was like that, and Jake laughed. The gloom he had known for four or five weeks was going. Somehow he was persuaded Mead had got better, but Bob yet doubted, and perhaps he ought to indulge his pal. Jake began to wonder what he did, and he went to the smoking-compartment. Bob held the railroad map under the lamp.

"There is not much use in studying the geography of Pennsylvania. I expect we will soon run out of the state," Jake remarked.

"That is so," said Bob. "The map is small, but the rivers are marked."

"Why do you want a river, old scout?"

"I want a bridge. Not a large bridge. A large bridge implies lattice girders; anyhow a lot of steel braces and rods. Two stringers across a creek would meet the bill."

Jake laughed. "Do you think about jumping over? Water carries no trail, and perhaps you feel you ought to use the old-time rules. Now I think about it, our exploits are rather like the hero's in a movie play. All the same, I've had enough, and if it won't annoy you I'd sooner stay on board."

"I am not going over. . . ." Bob rejoined with some dryness and stopped, for the conductor came from the vestibule.

Bob gave him the tickets and he nodded.

"You want to get up at three o'clock. Better take a card for your berth."

“Then you are not going through?”

“A new man comes on board in the morning,” said the conductor, and went off.

“All fits in,” Bob remarked. “You might see the porter gives us a section. I want the bottom berth; you will take the top.”

“Very well,” said Jake, “I suppose you’re planning a fresh stunt, but if it implies jumping off a fast train, you must cut me out.”

Bob smiled and let him go. Perhaps he used needless caution, but he thought his plan would work. When Jake returned, he gave him the parcel from the store.

“As soon as you are in your berth pull off your clothes and hand them down behind the curtain. When you get up, you’ll put on the others. I want the string and paper.”

“Now I begin to see!” said Jake. “But you have forgotten something: our hats will be the hats we had when we went to bed. I don’t like mine.”

“The hats and clothes will harmonize,” Bob rejoined dryly. “Your part’s to look like a clerk from a way-back country store. In the circumstances, you had better let me talk.”

They went to a second-class car and Bob took the lower berth between the seats. Soon afterward Jake, on the shelf above, dropped down his old clothes and the paper and string. Bob changed his for the store suit and rolled up the others in a neat parcel.

“Now you can go to sleep,” he said. “When it’s time to get up I’ll call you.”

Pulling out his watch, he stretched his legs and shut his eyes. In three hours he must wake up, and he expected to do so. He did waken, and when he knew the time he drew back the curtain. The car rocked and rattled, and the big lamp swung. Wheels rolled, and the locomotive’s snorts rose and sank with a measured throb. Then Bob heard steps and frowned; he hoped the new conductor was not going to prowl about the train. After a few moments he saw it was the porter, and he pushed out his head.

“Where are we?” he inquired in a drowsy voice.

The fellow told him, and Bob asked when he went to sleep.

“To-night. I swop jobs next stop,” the porter replied.

For five minutes Bob waited. But for the rumble of wheels and click of the rail-joints all was quiet. When the car rocked the green curtains swung. The seats across which they were not drawn were not occupied, and so far as Bob could see, the passengers were asleep.

Slipping noiselessly from his berth, he stole through the car. At the door he was forced to stop and put down his parcel, because the spring lock was powerful and he did not want the bolt to snap. Using both hands, he opened the door. The narrow smoking-compartment was empty, and he turned his head. It looked as if nobody in the car had heard him; at all events, the waving curtains were not drawn back, and he crossed the vestibule to the platform.

The night was frosty and a half-moon sailed across a gap between thin clouds. In front, the light touched a wood and high broken ground. The train was running downhill and, if Bob's calculations were accurate, a river followed the valley. The cars sped through the wood, and where the track curved the head-lamp's beam picked out naked silver trees. Then the curve got sharp, the trees rolled back, and water sparkled in the moonlight.

Holding on by one hand, Bob allowed his body to swing out from the steps. Jake's old clothes hung from his other hand, and he waited for the car to take the bridge. After a few moments the wheels struck a sharper note, and the river sparkled behind dark ironwork. The girder was not high, and Bob, swinging his arm, let the bundle go. Water splashed, and he jumped back for the other parcel. He must be quick, because he did not want his clothes to fall on the bank.

The bundle opened when it left his hand, but he thought the scattering garments cleared the girder, and for a few moments he sat down on the steps. His clothes and Jake's were gone, and although they might not sink, he hoped the current would carry them some distance from the bridge. He imagined a number of the passengers had noticed two workmen's rather noisy arrival. In the morning the workmen would not be about and it would look as if they had got down in the dark. At all events, the new conductor would be satisfied they were not on board. Bob thought the trail, so to speak, was broken when he got into his berth.

Treading noiselessly, he went back through the car and was soon asleep. Jarring brakes and the bell disturbed him, but he did not get up, and some time afterward the new conductor pulled back the curtains.

"She's on time, and we stop in ten minutes. Lemme see your ticket."

"It's gone," said Bob, feeling in his pockets. "Maybe the other fellow took it. Anyhow, we got his card."

"If he took your ticket, you ought to have got off last stop."

Bob yawned as if he were half asleep, and pulled out his watch. He imagined Jake was awake and hoped he would not meddle.

“Why, for sure! We reckoned to stop over and look up some friends. Now I s’pose we can’t, but we were all right as far’s the last stop and we’re going to Chicago. Can you bill us through?”

“I’ll put you off where you join the west-bound. I want four dollars, and I’m waiting. You ain’t lost your roll?”

Bob bought two tickets. The conductor gave him an ironical grin. “You stuck to your wad! Looks as if your home town was not as dry as mine.”

He went off, and Jake got down from his shelf.

“Well, I suppose the fellow reckons he has accounted for our sleeping on, but he annoyed me. When you’re sternly sober, to be thought you’re not is annoying!”

Bob smiled. Jake’s new clothes were obviously cheap. The coat, in which he had slept, was crumpled, and the trousers were short.

“You look rather like a back-township hayseed after a night with the boys,” Bob said. “To play up might help.”

“The time when I might have played up properly is gone. Then it’s no doubt expensive, and you declare we will soon go broke.”

Bob nodded. “I hope to make Chicago, but until the old man sends us money we must stop at the nearest thing to a dollar hotel that has survived the war. I don’t expect you’ll like it.”

They left the train at a large station and got some food at a quick-lunch counter. The row of high stools was occupied; Jake had hardly room to use his elbows, and an electric organ made discordant music. The big window was undivided glass, and he grumbled that he hated to feel as if he lunched in the street. For a moment the noisy organ stopped and his voice carried well.

“If you’re not happy, all you have got to do is to pull out,” remarked the landlord.

“I expect you’re logical,” Jake agreed. “The drawback is I’m hungry, and the food you put up is better than it looks. In fact, I’ll risk another lot. But why has your organ gone sick?”

“There’s your hash,” said the landlord, slamming down a thick plate. “When I’m busy I’ve no use for fool talk. You want to eat and quit.”

Jake occupied himself with his knife and fork, but when he got down from his high seat he shrugged.

“You are sternly utilitarian, Bob, and I suppose you approve, but you must admit that businesslike virtues are not picturesque. Then at Whitriggs one did what one liked to do, and nobody bothered.”

"So long as you are rich, you are not forced to bother," Bob rejoined.

"It's pretty obvious," Jake agreed, with a frowning glance at his new clothes. "The queer thing is I was satisfied with a battered oilskin cap and a paint-stained jersey, but my recent outfit jars. I didn't mind being taken for a bootlegger, but I'd sooner folk did not think me an industrious country clerk. You are a philosopher. How do you account for it?"

Bob took his arm and pushed him ahead. "I doubt if folks would think you an industrious clerk. The railroad man did not. Besides, in an American town, one does not philosophize on a crowded sidewalk. The citizens don't like it. Let's go to the park."

Jake agreed, and they found a bench at a quiet spot. The frost had melted from the trees, and behind the bank of shrubs the sun was warm. Jake sat down and lighted his pipe.

"You got our tickets for Chicago. What's the reserve fund?"

"Seven dollars and fifty cents," said Bob. "I don't know if the Middle West folk are remarkably trustful. To telegraph the old man might put inquirers on our track, and I wired George Staines at Westminster. The boat from Vancouver does not go every day. I expect the old man must fix things with an American bank."

"Then we must wait some time for the money. What about our taking a job?"

"We'll try, but I'm not hopeful. You see, we're not Silesians, Poles, Ruthenians, or Letts, and I doubt if I have much talent for anarchist politics."

"In some circumstances, I might cultivate a talent," Jake remarked. "But why is our being North Americans a drawback?"

"Working Chicago is not American; anyhow, a very small part of the citizens were born in Illinois. I expect the Americans hold the soft jobs, and since we cannot join their trade guilds we must compete with the foreigners."

"Well, I suppose that is so. All the same, you haven't stayed at Chicago."

Bob smiled. "I was at Toronto University, and sometimes I read the newspapers."

"At Oxford they know much about Athens and Rome and Alexandria two thousand years ago. New York, Montreal and Melbourne don't interest them much," said Jake. "One can study the habits of Scythians and Gauls, but nobody bothers about up-to-date Hoosiers. For a great trading nation we are a queer lot; but just now the important thing is I'm not, for example, a federated bricklayer."

To see Jake joke was some satisfaction, and for a time Bob indulged him. Then they loafed about the town and went to the station. Not long afterward the west-bound express arrived, and Bob, watching the big locomotive, baggage cars, dispatch cars, and Pullmans roll across the switches, acknowledged a thrill. Perhaps he was boyish, but the American railroads fired his imagination. They stood for triumphant cooperative effort: to link up East and West, across the alkali deserts, Rockies and Sierras was something of an exploit.

Moreover, when he got on board, he felt that he himself had conquered. His talents were not remarkable, but he had beaten Carlyon and cheated the sea. Then he had cheated the bootleggers and perhaps the American police. Bob, however, did not want to dwell on that, and, after all, to boast was rash.

A hoarse whistle screamed and the couplings jerked; the car lurched, the bell tolled, and the station offices rolled back. Bob settled himself in a corner seat, Jake smiled and lit his pipe.

"She's off, and all we have got to do is to wait for your father's check," he said. "When it arrives, where do we go? Down the lake to Port Arthur, or west for Seattle?"

"I think not. We don't want to interview the Customs officers, and when we reach Vancouver I'd like to come by a Canadian train. My notion's to steer for Montana and get off the N.P. cars in the Milk River district. Perhaps we could hire an automobile, but I expect one could hike to the boundary and make the Canadian Pacific track in a few days. Anyhow, we wouldn't be bothered by the Immigration Bureau. Except where the railroads cross, the frontier's open."

"Not a fort, not a gun," said Jake, and laughed. "Well, to walk across like hobos is the proper climax for our adventures. We'll fix it."

CHAPTER XXVI

A STOP BY THE WAY

THE train was on time at Chicago, and Bob, getting down at the big station, allowed the stream of passengers to carry him along. He was halfway across the continent, but he did not know where he went, and for the first time since he started he felt himself forlorn. When one's money was almost gone, to face a great American city was daunting.

After a time he stopped Jake at the end of an office block. The traffic flowed round the corner, but in the arch of the huge building nobody jostled them, and Bob, rather drearily, looked about. He saw walls like cliffs, shining pavements, and fleets of automobiles. People pushed along the sidewalk. Their step was swift and purposeful; Bob imagined they steered for street cars and were going home. On the lower floors of the high buildings lights began to burn. By and by groups of young men and women came from the arch.

"The offices are shutting down, and we'll soon be swept off the steps," Jake remarked. "In the Old Country one sent for a cab; but to travel light has some advantages and our boots are pretty good. Well, we mustn't block the traffic. Which way do we steer?"

"Down-town; very much down-town, I expect," said Bob. "Since we don't know where that is, we'll try to find a friendly patrolman."

They stopped a big officer, and Jake inquired where the workmen lived.

"Some have got homes," the patrolman replied. "They've got flivvers and ride into town."

Bob knew a "home" implied a separate dwelling-house. At Toronto, people had homes; in other cities he knew, all who were not rich crowded the tenements. "Then I reckon they're lucky," he remarked. "What we want is the district where the factory people board."

"You're white men," said the officer. "You don't want to bach. it with dagos and yellow trash. Well, lemme see. . . ."

He gave them some directions and resumed: "If you look around awhile, I guess you'll get fixed. A street car starts four blocks ahead."

Bob thanked him and they set off, but when they saw the crowd about the car they resolved to walk. The walk was long, and the outside of the cheap boarding-houses they studied was not inviting.

"When do you expect your check?" Jake inquired rather anxiously.

"I think we must wait for a week," said Bob. "The old man might fix it by telegraph, but my message carried a hint about caution, and he's pretty smart. Then my sending George was significant, and I reckon he'd ask somebody at Seattle to write a Chicago bank. . . ." Bob stopped, and smiled when he resumed: "I imagine I left him guessing."

"Oh, well," said Jake, "we mustn't be fastidious, and we'll stop at the first place where they have room. Supper will soon be served, and I wouldn't like to get mine at a coffee-wagon."

After a few minutes they reached a workmen's hotel. The hall was large and, but for the matches and cigar stubs on the floor, comparatively clean. A row of hardwood chairs went along the front of the big window, and sticky fly-papers dangled from the electric light brackets. A man leaning against the counter gave Bob a careless glance.

"Want a room?"

Bob asked the rate, and when he was enlightened knitted his brows.

"You pay in advance," the landlord added.

"There's our pile," said Bob, pulling two or three bills from his wallet. "In a few days we reckon to get fresh supplies."

"They all say so," remarked the other moodily.

"We expect to show you. In the meantime, do you think we could get a job?"

"You might," said the landlord. "See me in the morning. Write your names in the book and take your key. If you want supper, you got to hustle."

When they reached the dining-room the other guests were getting up, and an impatient waitress gave them a scornful glance. Jake's smile, however, banished her annoyance, and Bob imagined the dessert she brought them was not properly included in the bill of fare. After supper they loafed drearily about the streets. The city's attractions for young men were numerous, but their landlord had their money and entertainment was not cheap. In the morning they went to the desk.

"What about a job for us?" Jake inquired.

"You might try Casey, and you can tell him I sent you along," said the hotel-keeper, and wrote an address on a card. "Take the trolly at the top of the street. You want to get there before the boys start in."

They got down at a packing factory, and a gateman sent them across the yard. On the other side a freshly cut tunnel went under the building, and a rusty engine occupied the mouth of the cave. Smoke rolled from the iron stack, and a man fastened some rivets in the driving-belt. When he saw the strangers he stopped.

"Hello! Are you looking for a job?"

Jake nodded, and the other resumed: "Well, I don't know but Casey might hire you. He made trouble yesterday and three of the boys quit. When Phil gets mad you want to watch out, but I've known a worse boss, and until she freezes hard he won't let up."

The machine was a concrete-mixer, and Bob supposed Casey excavated space for storage under the factory. Fresh concrete will not bear frost, but the mixing-pans and foundation were some distance underground. After a few minutes the contractor and the gang arrived. Bob pulled out the hotel card, and Casey gave him a thoughtful glance.

"Ted Hallam's me friend and ye's don't look like stiffs. Anyhow, ye're white, and I'm not hiring foreigners. Can ye's dig and carry cement?"

"Suppose you let us show you? If we don't make good, you can fire us out," said Bob.

Casey told them to follow him along some inclined planks. The engine had started, and muddy gray liquid splashed in the concrete pan. Stopping by the machine, the contractor indicated a pile of cement bags.

"Feed her all she can use; ye needn't choke her up," he said to Bob. "Get to ut. I'll watch."

Bob pulled a bag from the pile and tilted a quantity of the stuff into a big iron hopper. Then he brushed the dust from his eyes and got his breath, for a bag of cement weighs about two hundred pounds. Casey nodded and went off with Jake, and Bob pulled off his coat. He had no other and the fine gray powder stuck to the cloth and his skin.

Sometimes the machine stopped, and he carried off wet blocks from the molding-press. The hole in which he labored was dark; steam, cement and engine cinders blew about, and when Bob stopped for dinner his eyes smarted and his back hurt. Jake's clothes were stained by soil, and plastic concrete stuck to his boots. They dined at a coffee-wagon opposite the factory gate, and then lay in the cement bags until the whistle blew. The bags were smeared by chalky dust, but Bob imagined his clothes could not get much dirtier.

To start again cost him something, and when at last the men went home, he was glad to fight for a place on a trolly-car. After supper, he put his feet

on the pipes by the window and tilted his hard chair. The hall was bleak, and unless one sat under a lamp the light was not good. Bob could not read the newspaper he bought—his eyes hurt; he was frankly tired, and by and by he stole off to bed. Yet, in a sense, he supposed he was fortunate. He had got a job and his pay would support him at the cheap hotel.

In the morning, and for four or five days, he went back to the concrete-mixer. Then, one afternoon when the hopper was quite full and the molded blocks were not ready to be moved, Casey called him.

"For a beginner ye shape pretty good, and I might keep ye's both on my pay roll. Chicago's a fine city and a hefty young fellow can get ahead, but ye's want to back the proper party. What's your politics?"

"I don't yet know your public men and I haven't studied up their program," Bob replied. "You see, I've not long arrived."

"From the Dominion? Sure, I spotted ye! Well, when you filed your papers you got a vote, and you want to use it right."

Bob frowned. Casey was Irish and in consequence a keen politician. In fact, he was no doubt the sort to use control in a down-town ward: when one tendered for municipal contracts, to be a minor boss might help. Bob rather liked the fellow, but his asking his support was awkward. A naturalized immigrant is entitled to claim a vote; the trouble was, Bob had not filed his papers.

"In a general way I'm anti-saloon, and I want America for the Americans," he replied. "So far, my politics don't amount to much; by and by I'll get things fixed."

"We'll help ye's," said the contractor with a smile. "Come along to the club Tuesday evening and hear the boys talk. Hallam's going, and I expect Mike will send his car."

"Thanks! but the machine's grinding sand and water," said Bob, and jumped for a cement bag.

After supper Jake and he smoked their pipes by the hotel window, and Bob remarked: "You went to the post-office!"

"No mail for you yet. Perhaps one oughtn't to grumble, but the cement gets into my hair and skin. If we hold our job for long, I expect to feel like a statue."

"I doubt if we will hold the job," Bob rejoined, and narrated his interview with the contractor.

"Well, to go to the fellow's club would not entangle us."

"Casey wants our vote, and if we join his lot he'll put us on the register. I expect the opposition scrutinize the lists. Well, when I was at Whitriggs a newspaper reported the forcible return to Glasgow of a young stowaway the captain had smuggled off his ship. The United States Immigration Bureau had spotted him twelve months after he landed."

"It's awkward," Jake agreed. "We must haunt the post-office and pull out for the West as soon as your letter arrives."

On Monday evening Bob pushed through the group at the delivery counter. His clothes were smeared by cement, and the others gave him room. The clerk slid a letter under the brass rail, and Bob's heart beat. When he tore open the envelope his grimy hands shook, and then his anxious frown vanished. The letter was from a business house at Seattle.

> "Complying with instructions, we have asked the —— Bank, Chicago, to pay enclosed check, without evidence of identity. Your endorsement is all the receipt required."

"That's fine! The old man took his cue," Bob remarked to Jake. "I don't know the Chicago rule, but our banks refuse to meet a stranger's check unless somebody whose word goes identifies him. As soon as they open in the morning I'll get the money, and then we'll take the first train for the Northwest."

The check was paid, and they went to a fur store on an important street. A fashionable young saleswoman glanced at Bob with some surprise, and Jake smiled. He admitted they did not look like people who bought expensive clothes.

"What can I show you?" the girl inquired.

"I don't know what I want to buy, but perhaps you can help," Bob replied. "Let's suppose you'd lived for fifty years at a small down-East farm. Sometimes, Saturday evenings, you rode to a country town in an old-fashioned rig——"

"One can't imagine anything like that. My partner isn't logical," Jake remarked.

The girl gave him a queer smile. "All the same, I see the picture. My home's a little farm in Michigan, and sometimes I want to be back." She turned to Bob. "At length, the crop was pretty good, and when we paid the storekeepers, something was left! But what about Sundays? Did I go to church?"

"I rather think you went to meeting-house."

“Why, of course!” the girl agreed. “Well, I reckoned I could buy some new clothes; but down-East folk are frugal, and I’d want to know how much I could spend.”

Bob stated a sum, and Jake broke in:

“We’ll raise the limit one hundred per cent. I don’t see why my partner leaves me out!”

For a few moments the saleswoman pondered, and then she said: “I’ve got it! Anyhow, I know the article a farmer’s wife in Michigan waited five years to buy.”

“In the end, I hope she was rewarded,” said Bob.

The girl shook her head. “When folks are old and tired one can wait too long. At last, the crop was good, but she didn’t need the clothes.” She pulled down a box and resumed: “Well, I think your friend will like your present. The goods are fresh from St. Louis.”

Bob examined the glossy skin and wrote on a card.

“Thank you! You’ll mail the box to Mrs. Merril. I expect the old lady owes you something.”

“The cost is yours. If I’ve helped you, why I’m glad,” the girl replied.

Bob turned to Jake, and when they went out he remarked: “She’s a bully saleswoman, but that’s not all. She’s a fine girl, and a touch of human kindness carries you farther than smart business tricks. I expect her folks used the ax and the ox-plow when Michigan was thick bush. The old pioneer stock is good stock. We can’t yet beat it.”

“You’re unconsciously romantic, old scout,” Jake rejoined, with a twinkle. “At all events, your grim sincerity has a charm you perhaps don’t know. On the whole it’s lucky you’re not a philanderer!”

“Oh, shucks!” said Bob. “Come on; I want to find out about our train.”

They went to a ticket-office, and two days afterward got down at a station by a river in northern Montana. A hotel, two or three stores and a row of small wooden houses faced the track. The light was going, frost sparkled in the prairie grass, and the wheel-torn soil was hard like iron. Bob went to a livery stable, but the proprietor declared his teams were hauling supplies for a detachment of U.S. cavalry, and although he had a garage he would not send a car to the frontier. After a rainy fall, he doubted if an automobile could keep the plowed-up trail across the numerous ravines.

Bob went to the little frame hotel, and when they got supper inquired if somebody would lend them horses.

“You might buy a horse, but you can’t hire one; the boys don’t take chances,” the landlord replied. “If you sold out in Alberta, you’d get your money back.”

Bob did not want to mark his arrival in Canada by selling an American horse. He imagined the Montana ranchers’ brands were known, and he would sooner not indicate that he was recently from the United States.

“How long would it take to walk across?” he asked.

“You might make the frontier in three days, but we’ll get snow before long, and you want to shove off soon. If you pull out at sun-up you ought to be at Gregory’s by dark. His place is a sort of road-house.”

“Pretty good hiking!” another remarked. “From Gregory’s the trail’s to Lamond’s at the Butte, but the last day’s worst. Still, a hefty young fellow ought to get to First House, Alberta, before folks go to bed.”

“I made it twice, on my feet,” said a man at the end of the table. “If I went now, I’d carry a blanket and a load of grub in a flour-bag.” He turned to Bob. “You can sew on trouser braces and sling her on your back.”

“We’ll try it,” said Bob, and got up. “Perhaps we ought to buy the truck we want before the stores are shut.”

CHAPTER XXVII

BOB MAKES IT

At daybreak Bob and Jake strapped on their packs and took the trail. The morning was cold, and in the night thin ice had crept across the quiet river pools; the naked poplars by the river were dark against the red threatening sky. Snow had not yet fallen, but one sensed arctic winter's advance.

Although Bob's heart beat high his look was thoughtful. Now he had started on the long journey's last stage, he must make good speed. He ought, perhaps, to have bought a blanket and a leather coat, but since he was in France he had not carried a heavy load, and Jake rebelled. To travel light had some advantages, and if all went as he calculated, they would not be forced to camp in a bluff.

The trail curved up a wooded slope, and at the top they slackened speed and looked about. Behind were trees, the winding railroad and thin blue household smoke. In front, as far as one could see, the short withered grass rolled back. Rise topped rise like frozen waves, and Canada was yet across the northern horizon. For half a mile the trail ran by a frozen sloo, and then the brown wheelmarks melted in the plain. Jake pulled up his pack and laughed.

"When one remembers your soberness, your talent for queer adventure is remarkable; but to pack a flour-bag across the cattle country is not playing up. You ought to wear chaps and a big hat and carry two guns."

"You stated something like that before," Bob rejoined. "I don't know how they put on chaps, and I haven't a horse."

"You might have bought a horse. In fact, I rather think we might have made Seattle on board the cars."

"It's possible," Bob agreed. "If you don't like adventure you must keep the beaten track; the drawback was, had we done so we might not have got far. Perhaps to hide when nobody looks for you is humorous, but where I can't weigh the risks I don't take chances. In the meantime, I'm not keen to camp on the prairie, and I'd sooner you pushed ahead."

They went round the frozen sloo, and when they climbed the rise in front, slanted sunbeams searched the plain. The frost-touched grass sparkled, and a dark blue smear a long way off cut the sky. Bob knew the smear was a prairie mountain, where thin woods rolled about broken ground perhaps a hundred feet above the long bare levels. The mountain was a useful landmark.

Sometimes the trail forked, and where a branch curved away he used his watch for a compass. When the ground was soft wagon-drivers took an independent line and then rejoined the road; but he must not follow a blind track to a sloo where ranchers cut hay. The sun was getting high, and he must go straight. He had no blanket, and the night would be cold.

By and by he left the trail and climbed a long rise between two forks. At the top all he saw was shining grass, broken in the distance by a bluff. A little creek went through the wood, and, stopping in the shelter of the trunks, they broke the thin ice and brewed a can of tea. Sunbeams searched the bluff, the dry sticks snapped with a cheerful noise, and in the dreary wilds the fire was homelike.

In front, the plain rolled back to the horizon and the trail had vanished. Bob turned his watch-hand to the sun and put a straw, pointing to the mountain, across the glass. Since he last took its bearing he had gone some distance, and the angle indicated that he had gone north. His business, however, was to find a small homestead, and for a map he had only a railroad folder.

"How far can one see locomotive smoke?" Jake inquired.

"Something depends on the light and the engine. If I were on a rise, I'd expect to spot a freight loco, burning soft coal, fifteen miles off; but before we hit the Canadian Pacific some time must pass. When you have had enough I'd like to shove ahead."

Jake lighted his pipe and stretched his legs to the fire.

"I'm going to stop for twenty minutes," he said firmly. "The ground is hard, and it isn't very long since Merril bought me my boots. Anyhow, I'm willing to bet on your finding the ranch."

"You are willing to bet when you ought to calculate," Bob rejoined. "Well, so long as you are satisfied to risk bed and supper, I suppose I must take a rest."

By and by Jake knocked out his pipe and pulled on his pack. When they left the wood the wind was cold; the sun was going west and their shadows trailed across the grass. For two hours they pushed on, and then, in a hollow, rejoined the track they had lost. Tall grass grew between the ruts, the soil

was pierced by gophers' holes, and sometimes one saw where a horse had broken a badger's tunnel. The gophers, however, were underground, and it looked as if the coyotes and prairie chicken were gone. But for the wind in the grass all was quiet, and only the broken trail indicated that men sometimes crossed the dreary wilds.

The shadows got long, the sun was low, and Jake noticed that Bob now carefully followed the track. When one was tired and dusk began to fall the frozen plain was daunting, and Jake admitted he did not want to wait for daybreak by a fire in a bluff. Where wagons went men were, and he labored on.

At length they heard horses' feet behind a shadowy wood. Cattle streamed through the bluff, and a picturesque rider pulled up his smoking horse.

"Hello, boys! You're for the ranch?"

Jake said they were going there, and the cattleman stretched out his quirt.

"Shove straight across for the ravine; the wagon-trail goes round. If you want supper you got to be quick."

He melted in the dark. Bob steered for the ravine. On the other side lights twinkled, and he saw indistinct corrals, barns and a wooden homestead. A beam from an open door sparkled on the frosty grass.

Somebody ordered them to go right in, and they joined the men at a table under a kerosene lamp. The cook gave them thin hard steak and beans, and coffee in heavy mugs, and after supper they talked to their host. He said that nothing much was doing; for the most part, he had shipped his beef-cattle East. Two or three of the boys were gone, and Bob and Jake might use their bunks. They were glad to do so, and soon after Bob got into his he was asleep.

In the morning he inquired about his bill.

"A dollar apiece," said the rancher in an apologetic voice. "I don't keep a road-house, and not long ago I gave supper to all who came along, but I've got to stop. Well, if you're for Alberta you ought to start. The snow's coming, and to your next stop is a pretty good hike."

"Can you not hire us a rig?"

"I want my horses," the rancher replied with a smile. "You might try Lamond when you make the Butte, but I doubt if he'll trade."

Bob called Jake, and they set off. The second day's journey was like the first, but their pace was not as good, and when a dark mound broke the horizon the sun was low. The lonely wooded hill was obviously the Butte,

and Lamond's homestead was behind the trees. They, however, could not reach it for two or three hours, and at dusk they stopped and made a fire in the bushes by a ravine. When they had eaten supper Bob speculated about making camp, but by and by a faint twinkle pierced the dark and they resumed the march.

An hour afterward they reached a small homestead and were given bunks in an outbuilding. That was all Bob remembered about Lamond's, until he heard heavy boots and a blue match-flame flickered in the dark.

He thought he had slept for ten minutes, but irons rattled by the stove, and he supposed it was morning. Somebody lighted the lamp, and he saw crooked poplar beams and the wooden shingles on the roof. A keen air blew through the open door, and Bob smelt cattle, aromatic burning wood and prairie hay.

Until breakfast was ready there was not much use in his getting up, and he mused. He was tired, but he was near his journey's end, and if all went well he would be in Canada by dark. Half asleep, he reviewed his wanderings. For the most part the pictures were blurred, and only when Mary Seaton occupied the foreground did they get distinct.

Bob saw her face Carlyon at Whitriggs when Mead lay across the hearth; he saw her, forlorn but resolute, give Jake her hand on board the plunging yacht in Douglas Bay. Clearest of all, he pictured her smiling and waving her handkerchief by the rail of the Liverpool boat. Bob imagined the smile cost her much.

Well, she had acknowledged him her confederate, and he had tried to carry out the job they jointly undertook. Bob fancied he sometimes blundered, and he might have taken an easier road, but the road he did take had carried him and his comrade to the Canadian frontier. Now he must push across, and with something of an effort he jumped from his bunk.

The water in the basin by the door was skimmed by ice and bracingly cold. Frost sparkled in the grass, and on the wide plain's edge a pale yellow belt broke the bank of lead-colored cloud. A biting wind swept the dreary levels and wailed about the Butte.

"The morning's bleak and the snow is not far off," Jake remarked. "In fact, I'd rather loaf by the stove than start."

Bob shook his head. "Snow would bother us. Lamond will not hire his horses, and we must get across while the trail is good."

When breakfast was over they took the trail. Pale sunshine touched the withered grass and a distant bluff got sharp; then dark clouds rolled up, the

bluff vanished, and the plain faded to a sweep of lifeless gray. The trail, however, led on in front, and Bob set his mouth and pushed ahead.

Jake did not talk. The march was his last, and when another day broke he hoped to be in Canada; but he was tired, and the trail was long. Moreover, it was possible the mounted police watched the boundary. The Royal Northwest boasted that they had not yet let the man they wanted go. Well, when they reached the frontier he would soon find out, and he silently labored on.

At noon they stopped for ten minutes by a little wood. The sky was dark, the wind was cold, and as far as one could see nothing broke the rolling grass. When they got up Jake shivered. Bob smiled and faced the gloomy north.

"Next stop's Alberta! The snow's coming, and we have got to shove along."

The afternoon got darker, and he kept the winding trail. Sometimes the wheelmarks vanished, but the line was obvious, and where the ground not long since was soft the grass was torn by horses' feet. At dusk thin snow began to fall, and the poplars in a bluff they crossed tossed in the biting wind. Bob hesitated to leave the trees, and had he carried an ax and a blanket he thought he might have stopped. Although the snow was not yet thick, the light was going and the wind got strong. He, however, had not an ax, and the trail would soon be covered.

"If I got Lamond's directions right, the homestead is not far off," he said. "I expect you can hold on for an hour or two?"

"It looks as if I must hold on," Jake replied. "Don't talk; shove ahead."

They went down a long slope. At the bottom the light faded, and all they saw was tossing snow. For a time the frozen trail, plowed by wheels up a boggy coulee, was plain; and then the holes and ridges were smoothed out, and Bob knew he was on unbroken grass. In daylight he would not have hesitated, but now he stopped.

As a rule a prairie trail is not straight; the track curves round swale and sloos and follows the easiest grade. Bob tried to argue like a teamster who hauled a heavy load.

"Are you looking for Alberta?" Jake asked, with a dreary laugh.

"I think we have got there," Bob replied. "To hit the first homestead is another thing. You are a pretty good yachtsman. Where's the north?"

Jake pulled off his hat and allowed the snow to beat his face. Then he turned his body.

“If the wind has not shifted, I’m facing nearly north; something east, perhaps. One can’t reckon by degrees.”

Bob nodded. In the dark, when one steers a boat to windward and the breeze is faint, one uses one’s chilled skin for a compass.

“Try to keep the line. I expect this low belt was soft and the trail went round. We ought to cut it on the other side.”

They pushed on, and sometimes Jake carried his hat, but for half an hour Bob knew nothing that left a mark had crossed the snowy grass. He was anxious, for if he miscalculated Jake and he might freeze. Then Jake stopped.

“We have hit it!”

Bob turned and his foot struck a frozen ridge. Moving his foot, he felt another, and when he advanced he plunged into a hole.

“We are through!” he gasped. “A team broke a badger’s earth not long before the frost. Looks as if the load was heavy. Some one was hauling cordwood to the ranch.”

They went faster, but the wind was savage and the snow was thick. Moreover, they did not know how far off the ranch was, and they could not hold out for long. At length, Bob saw a row of posts and touched jangling wire. Where a fence was there ought to be a house, and, following the posts, he presently saw a light. Then, although he and Jake were exhausted, they ran, and in a few moments beat on a door. The door opened and a man’s figure cut the light. Behind him the reflections from a flickering lamp touched shiplap walls.

“The snow’s fierce,” Jake gasped. “Perhaps you can give us food and some sort of bed.”

“Why, certainly!” said the other. “But I want to see you, and the lamp’s blowing out. Go right ahead.”

They beat the snow from their clothes and went into a small hot room. A woman got up from a chair by the stove, and Bob, leaning against the table, pulled off his hat. The blood came to his skin and his eyes were dazzled by the light.

“Are we in Canada, ma’am?” he asked.

“First House, Province of Alberta,” the woman replied.

Jake braced up, and, turning to Bob, laughed.

“You made it, partner! You’re a bully old scout!”

CHAPTER XXVIII

A FRESH CALL

A WHISTLE screamed, the Vancouver express swung round a curve, and Bob went to the platform behind the car. The woods along the track got thin, and above the dark pine-tops white mountains cut the serene sky. The snow, however, did not reach the valley, and a warm Chinook wind blew across the trees.

In front, for a few minutes, Burrard Inlet sparkled in the sun, and then the shining water was hidden by sawmill smoke. Log-piles and tall stumps dotted the clearings by the line; split-rail fences and little frame houses rolled past, and Bob smelt sweet resinous scents. At the other end of the Inlet the *Empress* boat waited for the express. Bob pictured his father on the wharf.

There was time for another pipe, and, getting a light, he reviewed the last few days. When they reached the Alberta homestead their difficulties vanished. The snow was thin, and, hiring a team, they started for a Canadian Pacific station. A local train carried them to Moose Jaw, where they bought some clothes and joined the Vancouver express. Nobody inquired who they were and where they went, and, by contrast with the beginning, the journey's last stages were ridiculously easy.

Although the northwest plains were white and frozen drifts choked the Kicking Horse defile, the first-class car was warm, and when the train plunged from the Rockies winter was left behind. In the Selkirks the sun shone and rivers brawled, and in the forest behind the Cascades Indian summer ruled. The splendid Pacific Slope was home, and Bob rejoiced to be back, but his satisfaction was not yet complete. Mary was in England, and when she was willing he must again go east.

He saw tall lumber stacks, rows of freight-cars, and sawmill sheds. Masts topped the roofs, and in the gaps between the buildings water sparkled. Office blocks went up a hill, a big white steamer shone against the dark firs in Stanley Park. Bob put up his pipe and pulled out his watch. But for half an hour the express had kept her time from Montreal, and in two or three minutes he would meet Hester and the old man.

When Bob jumped down Seward was on the wharf. His coat was a blue reefer and his yachting cap carried a gold badge. Two or three hundred yards from the wharf a handsome white sloop rode behind a mooring buoy. Seward gave Bob his hand and his eyes twinkled.

"You got through, son! 'Pears as if you hadn't much use for writing, but your wire arrived."

Bob nodded and looked about. Since the fight at Whitriggs caution had become mechanical. A city policeman had stopped a few yards off, but he watched a group of Chinamen who disputed by the luggage car. Bob suspected his father had seen his glance, and knew the old man would wait.

"My message to George left you guessing? I'll explain another time. I see you brought the sloop across. The swallow-tail flag is something fresh."

"I reckoned I might take a holiday, and the boys thought I ought to be the yacht club commodore," Seward replied.

Bob glanced at the others. Jake talked to Hester, and although his voice was careless his look was embarrassed. Hester's calm was rather inscrutable, but a touch of color had come to her skin.

"What about your luggage?" Seward inquired.

"All we have got we carry," Bob replied with a smile. "I want an hour in town, and then we might start."

"We'll get lunch," said Seward. "I ordered the C.P.R. folks to keep a table."

The lunch at the big hotel was good, but the talk was rather about British Columbia than Scotland. Seward took his cue, and Bob had no grounds to think it cost Hester much to conquer her curiosity. All the same, he knew his father and sister; he must soon account for his puzzling telegram. At length Seward asked:

"Do you want me to go up-town with you?"

"I think not," said Bob. "Where ought we to get a file of Scottish newspapers?"

"You might try the city library, Board of Trade, and the Donaldson Line agents. I expect the *Glasgow Herald's* mailed across for the market and shipping news. Will you take my card?"

Bob refused. His search was long, but at a shipping office he was given a bundle of newspapers, and for some time Jake and he studied the columns. Then Jake quietly indicated a paragraph headed

YACHTING DISASTER.

> "A lifebuoy, a broken dinghy and other wreckage from the yacht *Whaup*, R.C.Y.C., has washed up on the Irish coast near Malin Head. The yawl recently left the Solway on a cruise, but since she touched at Douglas has not been heard of. The wreckage carries her owner's stamp, and there is not much cause to hope that he and his companion escaped the storm or collision in which she sank. Mr. Carlyon and Mr. Seward were expert yachtsmen, and the probability is the small vessel was overwhelmed by the recent northwest gale."

"That's all," said Jake. "Nothing about Whitriggs!"

"It's important, because the date is fixed. Had not Mead got better we'd have found the fight recorded about a week before. Carlyon could not bluff the doctor and the police."

Jake said nothing, but when he gave the clerk the newspapers his hand shook, and Bob knew the reaction from the strain he had borne was keen. When they were in the street Bob resumed: "Since Carlyon knows we were at Douglas, I expect he knows Mary was with us."

"He did not know where she went, and if he found out, my aunts would see he didn't bother her. Perhaps you noted that the narrative implies he wants people to think us drowned?"

"He's your banker," Bob said in a thoughtful voice. "But I expect the old man and Hester wait for us."

Jake smiled; the smile was frank and careless, like a boy's.

"So long as Mead's not dead, Carlyon can take all my money he has not yet got. I must pay for my trustfulness, and it has not cost me as much as it might have cost."

They went to the wharf and joined Seward at the landing steps.

"Hester's on board, and we ought to be off," he said. "Did you find the *Herald*?"

"We did, sir," Jake replied. "After the news I got, I'm another man."

The sloop's mainsail was hoisted, and when they got on board the hired man slipped the moorings and started the auxiliary engine. In the Narrows the wind was light and baffling, but when Beaver Point rolled astern and the Strait opened up they hoisted the topsail and stopped the screw. The afternoon was fine and a mild Chinook breeze rippled the blue water. Seward sent his man forward and took the wheel.

"Now," he said, "I guess your story's interesting."

Jake began the narrative. He pictured Whitriggs, the Carlyons and their extravagance. Bob thought the pictures accurate. Jake did not denounce his relations; he tried to be just. For a time the others were quiet, but Seward knitted his brows, and when Jake talked about Mary, Hester's glance got keen. The story absorbed them, and Bob began to look about.

The sloop, sailing close-hauled, steered northward up the Strait. Her tall canvas slanted, and broken threads of foam lapped her gently plunging hull. The sea was luminous green and white, and to starboard the snowy Cascade Mountains shone in the low sun. Yellow light touched the summits, the ravines were blue, and dark forests rolled down the lower slopes. All was serene and beautiful, but in the splashing at the bows Bob heard the Solway tide and he recaptured a red-sailed dinghy's plunge across the angry combers. He was on the hove-up gunwale and Mary was at the helm.

Jake narrated the fight at Whitriggs and his searching the newspapers, and stopped for a few moments. Then he said, "When we started down the firth Bob took control. Perhaps he will enlighten you about our crossing the United States."

Bob pondered. Although Jake had not tried to be theatrical his tale was dramatic. He acknowledged himself a fool; one felt he did so deliberately, and the others were moved. Well, Bob's part was to use a light touch, and after all, his exploits in America were humorous; but so long as he talked about Mrs. Sutton and Mary he did not joke. He saw Hester studied him, and sometimes he thought she studied Jake. His father's glance was quietly observant; but when Bob reached their boarding the rum-ship his carefulness vanished and he plunged ahead. Seward's eyes began to twinkle, and Hester laughed.

"I don't see you stealing the smugglers' liquor," she remarked.

"Jake stole the liquor. Do you see him, plastered by wet cement, using a shovel in a dark hole?"

"To do so is hard," Hester admitted. "Jake, however, likes to joke. As a rule, your humor's unconscious humor."

"You don't want to let her bother you," said Seward. "I see where you missed the easy trail, but you got where you meant to go."

"Bob's habit is to get there; he's not daunted by a rocky road," said Jake in a quiet voice.

Seward gave him the wheel and stood on the cabin top. The sun was near the sea, the wind was light, and mist began to creep about the shadowy woods. Two or three miles in front, tall black pines crowned a point.

“I like a quiet night,” he said. “Steer for the broken tree; we’ll bring up behind the rocks.”

They anchored in a smooth inlet and got supper. When the hired man carried off the dishes Seward lighted his pipe. A lamp hung from a beam and a small stove burned in a corner by the bulkhead. But for the ripple of the current along the planks all was quiet. Hester got some sewing and Bob rolled a cigarette.

“When you came back from Toronto my intention was to give you a share in the business and start you to work,” Seward said to him. “If you and Jake agree, the program stands.”

“All I want is to get busy,” Bob replied.

“If I was entitled to choose a partner, Bob would be the man; but I don’t see why you ask for my agreement,” Jake remarked.

Hester put up her sewing. “Since you mean to talk about business, perhaps I ought to go.”

“You will not embarrass Bob, and I would sooner you remained,” said Jake, and turned to Seward. “I squandered in the Old Country a sum you ought to have used at the mill. To pay me out perhaps was awkward, and I’ve lost most of the money I got. In fact you and Bob know me for a reckless wastrel, and you are justified to leave me alone. But there’s another thing——”

“Carlyon’s statement?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jake very quietly. “One gets over shell-shock, but when one inherits a mental weakness——”

Seward smiled. “Carlyon lied; the sort of lie that’s dangerous because it’s founded on some truth. Your father helped me start the house; he was a first-class business man, his judgment was cool and sound. For some time he was president and I was boss carpenter. Well, the company’s famous; I don’t see men who know admitting it was founded by a lunatic!”

Jake straightened his shoulders as if he threw off a load. His eyes sparkled, but Seward motioned to him to be quiet.

“I’m not through. St. John Carlyon’s temper was hot and the man who tried to bluff him took some chances. His wad was his friend’s, but he hated to be cheated, and his answer to a bully was a blow. Sometimes I see him handling the mutinous Siwash rafter gang. Well, he died when you were a boy, but he was not the sort his son forgets. He certainly quit the British Navy. So far your uncle’s tale is accurate. Send a man like that to the China Station, keep him cruising about muddy rivers in the sun, cut his supplies

and question his reports, and when you call him home he's ready for trouble."

"The trouble arrived, sir?"

"On board a flagship. Something about orders at a fleet review. I don't know much. My notion is, Carlyon got mad and didn't use your classical Navy rules. Well, his friends were numerous, he was long in China, and somebody got a medical board to let him gently down. I'm guessing, Jake, but by and by I'm going to find out. Well, you didn't take all your fortune out of my hands, and you are my partner by an agreement I cannot break unless you consent. I don't want to break it, but if you stick to Bob and me, you must pull your proper weight and stay with your job."

"I'll try, sir," Jake replied with some emotion.

"Then it's fixed. When we're home I'll get a lawyer to write the deed. In the meantime you have a house and estate in Scotland. What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know, sir. Now I have got my freedom I'd almost be resigned to give up the estate."

Seward shook his head. "Although I'm no longer your trustee I'd hate to see you robbed. Besides, the money you ought to claim would help you and Bob at the mill. Your uncle reckons you are drowned and won't hesitate to seize your property."

"But would he not be forced to get an order from a court? Then, since my aunts inherit something, he must account for the estate, and so forth ——"

"If your uncle is the man you and Bob describe, I reckon he'll beat the lawyers. In fact, I guess he's the sort to seize all that's yours and make his get-away."

"It's possible, but I can't go back to dispute his claim. I admit I'm afraid."

"Well, it might be risky, and you are not the proper man. Carlyon fooled you before," Seward agreed. "Still, somebody must go."

"I think I am the proper man," said Bob in a quiet voice.

"No!" said Jake firmly, and the blood came to his skin. "When I wanted you, you came, and but for you Mrs. Carlyon would have carried out her devilish plot. I cannot use your splendid generosity another time."

"The job is Bob's," Hester remarked with a queer smile. "You need not be scrupulous, Jake: he *wants* to go."

"The important thing is, I am going," Bob declared.

Jake hesitated, and then his preoccupied look vanished, as if he saw a light. Seward studied the group, but for the most part his glance searched Hester's quiet face.

"It's fixed," he said. "At sun-up we'll steer for Victoria, and if the lawyers think my notion right, Bob will start for Glasgow with two or three documents. Now I think I'll take a look at the weather and the anchor lamps."

He beckoned Bob, and when they went on deck he rubbed the lamp glass and pulled up a few feet of cable. Then he said:

"I'm willing for you to go. Sewards meet their bills, and if you put across the job, I reckon we can claim that you have paid in full. But I want to know—— You are ready to start, just because you feel you ought to help your pal?"

"Not altogether, sir," Bob replied.

"Ah!" said Seward. "I saw Hester guessed—you are going for the girl Jake talked about?"

"That is so, sir. Not long ago she refused me, but perhaps she can be persuaded. I hope you approve."

For a few moments Seward was quiet, and then he touched Bob's arm.

"I haven't met Miss Seaton, but all I know about her I like. Then you are not a fool, Bob, and I don't see a girl who is only a looker carrying you away. If she is the sort you think, I guess I'll be satisfied."

"Thank you," said Bob. "All she meets are Mary's friends, and Hester's kind; but perhaps I ought to build another house."

Seward smiled. "Your house is at the mill, and I expect Hester will give your wife control. You are not as keen as your sister, Bob. Don't you see ——?"

"You think she'll marry Jake?"

"For sure!" Seward agreed. "Folks might allow she ran some risk; but before you start Jake has got to see the best alienist doctor in British Columbia, and I guess his certificate, which you'll take to Scotland, will banish all doubt. Your partner's good stuff, and when Hester marries him he'll go soberly. You don't want to bother, son. Well, the night's fine, and at sun-up we'll shove across for Victoria and get to work."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LAST ENCOUNTER

On the day after Bob reached Glasgow he started for Dumfries, and in the evening his hired car sped across the lonely moors. A Solway gale had scattered the rain-clouds and the stormy firth shone between the hills. White belts of surf marked the shoals and the reflections of the angry sunset touched with red and orange the uncovered sands.

Bob was recaptured the evening the flood-tide first carried him along the Solway. Rocks and moorland famous in Scottish story rolled by and vanished in the summer haze. All was dim and, so to speak, unsubstantial—a dreamlike country of romance. Well, Bob had found romance there, and he pictured the dinghy in the hollow by the bank when the east wind raged across the sands. Mary waited calmly for the tide; her pluck was fine, but he knew, to some extent, she was confident because he was about.

Afterward Mary had trusted him to put across another job, and he thought she would admit he had made good. Yet the job was not finished and he must not boast. His antagonists were unscrupulous and he must brace up for the last fight. Bob turned and looked in front.

Ragged mist tossed about broken hills and naked trees. Then the car sped down a valley and black fir plantations bordered the road. Where the thick woods rolled back, tall oaks and beeches dotted a slope. A battlemented tower topped the trees and behind the branches gray walls loomed. Bob had thought he had done with Whitriggs; but when he went he stole away, and now he returned something like a conqueror.

At Glasgow he had consulted a Scottish lawyer, who agreed that Seward's line was good. The lawyer made some inquiries by telegraph, and then recommended Bob to wait and let him go to Whitriggs. Bob, in the meantime, refused. After all, Carlyon was Jake's relation and had been Bob's host; so long as the fellow relinquished his claim to his nephew's property, Jake would sooner a stranger did not meddle. Anyhow, Carlyon must have his chance to be honest; if he were resolved to cheat, one could use force.

The gates by the lodge were open, and lights began to glimmer behind the shadowy trees; but when the car stopped something of Bob's confidence

vanished. The door in the arch was old and strong, and above the crumbling coat-of-arms he saw dark battlements. His part, so to speak, was to demand the ancient fort's surrender, and he felt his youth and raw modernity. Ordering the driver to wait, he went up the steps, and the butler, called by a surprised servant, met him in the hall.

"Save us a'! You're alive and well, Mr. Seward!" said the old fellow, startled from his Scottish calm. "Ye'll have news o' Mr. John?"

"I'm not yet drowned, and Jake's all right," Bob replied with a smile. "I suppose the house is full?"

"We have a party for the pheasant-shooting, sir, but we'll find you a room. Will I send for your luggage?"

"Not yet," said Bob. "If Mrs. Carlyon is occupied, don't disturb her. I expect to find somebody I know."

The butler hesitated. His surprise was keen, but Bob imagined he might use Carlyon's, and, motioning the man back, he crossed the floor. Then the door to the house opened and Mead advanced.

"Seward!" he shouted, and stopped.

"I myself," said Bob coolly, although to see the fellow was some relief.

Mead gave him a puzzled glance and laughed.

"When I heard the car stop I certainly did not expect to find you had arrived. Something like a resurrection! What?"

"In a sense that is so. I admit my surprise and satisfaction when you opened the door."

"Thank you!" Mead rejoined. "Before you ran off your politeness was not very marked, but I think I see——" He turned to the butler. "I'll look after Mr. Seward. We don't want you."

The butler vanished, and Mead lighted a cigarette. His evening clothes were rather tightly molded to his wide chest and powerful limbs. His red neck was like a bull's neck and his fleshy face was sensual. Bob knew him for something of a brute, but he did not mean to quarrel with the fellow. When they were alone Mead gave him an ironical grin.

"You are not my sort, Seward, but had it not been for Jake Carlyon I don't suppose I'd have bothered you. Where is your crazy friend?"

"Jake is not at all crazy, and he is not drowned. I think that's all you need know."

Mead nodded. "I'm not very curious. Although I think he meant to put me out, to get him back is Carlyon's business."

"It looks as if you were willing for us to think Jake did put you out. Were you much hurt?"

"For a day or two I believe the doctor was anxious. Then we didn't know where you were, and I dare say Carlyon was not keen to relieve your minds. All the same, when I think about it I am puzzled. Jake's, of course, a fool, and from the beginning we jarred, but I certainly did not try to shoot him, and I don't yet altogether see why we fought."

"Then you're not very bright," Bob rejoined. "If Jake had not claimed that he was host, I'd have made you accountable."

"If it's some comfort, you have my apology. I ought not to have bothered Miss Seaton, but we were ragging, and perhaps I was not remarkably sober. Then I rather think——"

"Let's be frank. Mrs. Carlyon worked on Jake's dislike for you, and she saw her husband gave you liquor. You were the rough-house man and she meant to use you."

"It's possible," Mead agreed dryly, and his face got red. "If all you imply is accurate, I don't like the part I was given. Anyhow, you're straight, and since I don't know about Carlyon we'll look him up." He stopped, and laughed when he resumed: "I expect his satisfaction will not be very keen."

Bob nodded. They had no grounds to dispute, and Mead no longer trusted his host. In fact, Bob imagined Carlyon was going to lose a useful confederate. They crossed a room where people danced, and one or two stopped and called to Bob, who smiled and nodded to Mead to go ahead. Mrs. Carlyon was not about, and Bob admitted he was not very keen to meet her. At length they found Carlyon and two or three more in the billiard-room. Carlyon leaned across the table pondering a stroke, but when he saw Bob he put up his cue and the color melted from his face.

"Seward arrived a few minutes ago," said Mead. "I heard the car stop, and picturing your relief when you saw him, I brought him along."

"Were not Jardine and the servants about?" Carlyon inquired.

"I sent Jardine off," Mead replied with a laugh. "The old fellow was as thunderstruck as I myself was."

Carlyon gave him a queer look and turned to Bob.

"Then you were not on board the yacht! But where is Jake?"

"We were on board; the important thing is, we were not drowned—but I mustn't bore your friends."

Mead turned to the others. "Sorry to spoil your game, but I expect Carlyon will win all you care to lose another time."

They went, and Carlyon's face got red.

"I don't like your meddling, Phil."

"So long as you thought me useful you gave me some authority," Mead rejoined with a truculent smile.

Carlyon said nothing. Bob's return was a nasty knock, and Mead's rebellion bothered him. To some extent Phil was his confederate, but he did not know all his plans, and Carlyon did not want him about. He wanted his wife and expected she would soon arrive. After a few moments Mrs. Carlyon came in. She frowned, and her thin mouth was tight. Bob saw she was not going to pretend. Without greeting him, she turned to Mead.

"We may be occupied for some time, Phil. I'd like you to see the others are amused——"

"If you don't mind, I'd sooner stay. For one thing, I begin to think you planned for me to help you get rid of Bob, and now it looks as if the plan didn't work, I admit some curiosity. I want to know where his crazy pal is and so forth."

"I do not want you to stay," said Mrs. Carlyon. "In the circumstances, perhaps you had better go."

Mead hesitated, but he went, and Bob smiled. He had expected Mrs. Carlyon to conquer, but Mead had begun to see a light and was stubborn. Then Bob braced up, for Mrs. Carlyon studied him with a sort of calculating haughtiness that fired his blood.

"Where is Jake?" she inquired.

"He is somewhere in North America; I may fix the exact spot later. Perhaps you would like to know a famous American doctor certifies his health and mental balance are normal? I have a copy of the document."

"One must approve your caution," Mrs. Carlyon remarked with a mocking smile.

"Some caution was advisable, ma'am, but the Glasgow lawyer thought me rash. To some extent for your sake, and to some extent because I know my partner, I refused to bring the fellow along."

Carlyon looked up, and, giving his wife an apologetic glance, turned to Bob.

"To dispute will not help, and I doubt if you expect our thanks. Suppose we take it for granted Jake is not drowned and you are entitled to act for him? What does he want?"

Bob pulled out his wallet. "I have his authority in his hand, and properly attested statements by people who know him, that they saw him on the date

fixed. The Glasgow lawyer declares the documents I carry would satisfy a Scottish court your nephew is alive and sane. Will you examine the copies?"

"I am not a lawyer," Carlyon replied in a scornful voice. "We would sooner you stated Jake's demands."

For a few moments Bob pondered. He knew Mrs. Carlyon's cleverness; moreover, he knew he had not weighed his lawyer's strongly urged advice. All the same, he was Jake's deputy, and the line his friend would take was plain.

"Well," he said, "Jake is not revengeful, and I think he'll be satisfied to get all that's lawfully his; Whitriggs, for example, and his interest in the sporting estate you jointly bought. Then we require an account of the profit and loss on the speculations and betting in which you, on his behalf, engaged."

"Since Jake is my debtor for a large sum his modesty is not remarkable," Carlyon rejoined. "To enforce his demands is another thing. To begin with, you must prove he is capable of managing his estate."

"My lawyer is willing to try," said Bob. "If you like he'll meet yours, but on the whole I'd sooner we ourselves arrived at a friendly agreement. Well, my father and I are Jake's partners, and I'm empowered to speak for him. So long as you meet us frankly, Jake will be generous; but if we are forced, we'll engage the best legal and medical help we can get."

Carlyon said nothing. He turned to his wife, and Bob saw her look was fixed. Her mouth was tight and a small stain of color touched her white face. Bob knew she hated him, but he had not much grounds to be afraid, and he resumed quietly:

"In the meantime, we have warned Jake's bank that the report of his death is not accurate and they are accountable for his money. A note has been sent the companies in which he invested; unless the transfer is in his hand his shares must not be sold."

"You have some talent for business," Carlyon remarked, and Mrs. Carlyon gave Bob a queer look. To know she could not hurt him was some comfort.

"One doubts if you do speak for Jake," she said. "My husband's nephew does not argue like a greedy shopkeeper."

"I do not claim much cultivation, ma'am. All I want is to see Jake gets a square deal."

"Yet I imagined you had some ambition," Mrs. Carlyon rejoined with a haughty smile. "My niece is a romantic fool, but she is cultivated and fastidious."

The blood came to Bob's skin, but he said quietly: "Miss Seaton knows my drawbacks; to weigh them is her business."

Then he got up and gave Carlyon the Glasgow lawyer's address. "We require an exact statement of all Jake's property in your control, his debts to you, and so forth. When our accountant has examined the document, a reckoning and adjustment must be made."

"Well, I must try to indulge you," said Carlyon carelessly, but Bob thought his hands shook and he was afraid.

"I suppose your business is now transacted?" said Mrs. Carlyon, ringing a bell. "But do you know where my niece is?"

"I do know, ma'am. Do you not?"

Mrs. Carlyon laughed. "We do not know how she got there, and perhaps you would sooner not enlighten us! Well, since we will not bother her to rejoin us, in one way you have no grounds to be disturbed. I doubt if you have really helped Jake; but you have not helped Mary much, and she is proud. Another time I suppose we shall meet your lawyer? Good-by, Mr. Seward!"

Bob bowed and went off, but when he crossed the hall he frowned, for he thought Mrs. Carlyon's sneer was justified. His car was at the steps, and to speed away from Whitriggs was some satisfaction. They climbed the long hill, and at the top the Solway gale banished his moody thoughts.

CHAPTER XXX

PAID IN FULL

BOB stopped for the night at Dumfries, and in the morning started for Westmorland. So far he had planned and thought for Jake, and now he was entitled to think for himself. Until Carlyon supplied the account demanded, his part was done; and he had not yet seen Mary.

When he got down from the train the sun was near the hilltops across the dale. Pale limestone crags broke the long pastures dotted by climbing sheep, and a dim river curved about the valley. On the other side, a white house and a wood of silver firs shone in the slanted beams. When the train rolled away only the bleating of sheep and the river's turmoil broke the brooding calm.

Bob took the road uphill and at the house was received by two old ladies in an old-fashioned room. Although their hair was white, their faces were not much lined, and Bob thought the tranquil charm of the valley marked their house and them. Yet he got an elusive sense of dignity, and for all their gracious quiet he knew Jake's aunts were not fools. He had not met their sort at Whitriggs, but the type was Mary's type, and Bob's look got thoughtful. On the strenuous Pacific Slope one did not cultivate a serenity like that. One was forced to hustle and sweat.

"We feel you are not a stranger, Mr. Seward," Miss Lavinia remarked. "Jake told us much about you, and in the letter Mary carried he declared that since you were with him he was confident. Now, if you are not much occupied, we hope you will stay with us."

As a rule Bob was not embarrassed, but the color came to his brown skin.

"Sometimes Jake exaggerates, ma'am. Although I should like to stay, I have business with a Glasgow lawyer, and I ought to get a train to-night. Jake, however, was keen for me to look you up, and then Miss Seaton helped us much. In a sense she was my confederate. Perhaps you know about my cablegram?"

"You stated you had *made it*," Miss Honor remarked. "That was all, but the message struck a victorious note."

" 'Made it' implies *got there*," Bob replied with a smile. "Cablegrams are expensive, and when I sent mine Jake and I were broke. Well, perhaps I boasted, but we had had something of a fight."

"I dare say you were entitled to boast; but all we know is that you won. Mary would like to hear your story, and we expect her in a few minutes."

Bob wondered whether Mary had told her hosts about his recent cablegram announcing his return, and on the whole thought she had not. For a time he talked about something else, and then he thrilled and got up, for Mary came in. When she saw Bob her color came and went, but she advanced calmly and gave him her hand.

"Mr. Seward is going to tell us how he and Jake crossed the Atlantic. We thought we would wait for you," said Miss Lavinia.

"I expect he would sooner you called him Bob," said Mary with a smile. "You see, he's been your nephew's friend since Jake was a boy."

"If he will allow us," said Miss Honor. "Well, Bob, we acknowledge our curiosity."

Bob gave Mary a grateful look. He felt she had owned him her friend, and she had meant to banish all formal politeness. Moreover, she had done so. His hosts were marked by old-fashioned dignity and grace, but he knew they admitted him to their exclusive circle. He, so to speak, had not broken in like a rude conqueror. Mary had opened the well-guarded gate, and perhaps she would open others outside which he had stood.

Yet, in the serene English house, to tell his tale was hard. Where all went smoothly, exploits like his looked uncouth. Besides, he had not much talent for romantic narrative, and he knew his audience finely sensitive. Well, Jake must be the hero; Bob's part was something like Sancho Panza's part.

At the beginning he was embarrassed. Although he must not cut out Jake's moodiness, he tried to dwell upon his careless freakish humor. He pictured the sinking yacht and Jake's launching overboard the marked buoy and oars; the rum-ship looming in the fog and his wrecking the dinghy. Then he stopped for a few moments and saw he had captured his audience. Mary's eyes sparkled. Miss Honor and Miss Lavinia had obviously not heard a tale like that before.

The raid at the landing was awkward to narrate. In fact, Bob did not remember much about all he did, but he wanted the others to see Jake's carrying off the liquor was a typical joyous extravagance, and when he noted Miss Lavinia's smile he was satisfied. For Mary's sake, his gentle hosts must not be jarred.

"I'd hate to bore you, and I expect in the Old Country my tale's not plausible," he said. "I don't know if it would be plausible in New York and Montreal."

"We know all happened like that," Miss Honor remarked. "Our lives are perhaps smooth, Bob, but the story of another's effort moves us. We hope you will go on."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bob, and for a moment or two looked about.

The light was going, and mist crept down the hill the window commanded. The trees about the house were motionless, and in the evening calm one heard the river's throb. Mary's face was in the gloom, but her quietness was significant, and the others did not ring for lights. Bob reflected that sometimes a contrast helps, and he resumed his rather Homeric narrative.

He pictured the trench in the wood, Mrs. Merril's kitchen, and his limping back from the post-office in his long boots; he touched the fight at the station and Jake's throwing the bootlegger against the wheels. Then he talked about their labors at the factory and their meals at cheap cafeterias and lunch-wagons. Yet he doubted if Miss Lavinia really saw her nephew fight for a high stool and gulp his food in five minutes.

Bob drew better than he thought. His portrait of himself was unconscious, but Mary knew her lover and the others sensed his stanch loyalty and sober resourcefulness. By and by, recapturing the suspense and thrill when the journey was nearly over, he let himself go. The others felt something of the strain he had borne and his resolve to know if Jake at length were safe in Canada. They saw the start at the cold dawn and the stern push for the boundary. He carried them across the snowy plain, and when he reached the Alberta homestead they shared his triumph.

"We made it," he said, and laughed, an apologetic laugh. "After all, our stealing across on foot was rather a joke. We might have applied for the necessary papers and have gone all the way on board a first-class car."

"You did not know Mead was not dead," said Mary. "Besides, when you started Jake ran another risk."

"The risk was daunting," Miss Honor remarked. "Perhaps all Jake has borne was not too much to pay for his escape from Carlyon and his wicked wife." She turned to Mary. "I don't want to hurt you, my dear, but when I think about her cruelty and the falsehoods she used——"

"Ah!" said Bob, "you claim Mrs. Carlyon's statement was false? I expect you knew Jake's father?"

“Sometimes St. John Carlyon’s temper was ungovernable; the word was used when we were girls. All the same, he was a better man than his brother, and he was not mad. That he publicly treated a superior officer with something like contempt is true, and I believe a court-martial was ordered. It is long since, and one forgets, but St. John’s friends were powerful and he was discharged by a medical board. You see, for all his temper, he was everybody’s favorite.”

Bob smiled. “Jake is like that. Well, it looks as if my father’s guess was good. To know you support him will be bully news. But was Mrs. Carlyon resigned to let Mary go?”

“She claimed her niece. Mary refused.”

“I was afraid,” said Mary in a quiet voice. “She thought me an awkward witness for the defense. I owe you much because you would not give me up.”

“It is done with,” said Miss Lavinia, and turned to Bob. “Jake was lucky because you were his friend. When you had given him his freedom you did not hesitate to come back to save his property.”

“You are kind, but I’m not as unselfish as you think,” said Bob, and looked at Mary.

Mary turned her head, and Miss Lavinia resumed: “Well, you have not told us all we want to know, and we had hoped you would stay with us. Are you forced to start for Glasgow to-night?”

“The lawyer expects me, and I had thought you might allow me to come back,” Bob replied, and, studying Mary, imagined she was willing for him to stay. “After all,” he went on, “I can telegraph another date, and I’ll risk it. You might tell me where the office is; in the Old Country one can’t telegraph from the station.”

“The post-office is at the village; I dare say Mary will go with you,” Miss Honor replied.

Mary agreed, and a few minutes afterward they crossed the garden. The road to the village curved downhill; dusk was falling and mist floated about the fields. Bob shut the gate and took Mary in his arms. For a moment she was quiet and he was afraid; and then her arm stole round his neck.

“Oh, Bob, perhaps I should not have allowed you to carry me away,” she said.

“The important thing is, you did so,” Bob rejoined. “I’m sorry I didn’t try before. I wanted to try, my dear, but I knew I must not. Sometimes things go like that; anyhow, so far, when I saw the line I wanted to take, I was forced to take another. There’s my apology!”

“For you to apologize is ridiculous,” said Mary in a gentle voice.

“Oh, well, if you will marry me I’ll know my luck has turned. In a way, perhaps, I’m entitled to claim my reward.”

“For helping Jake?” said Mary.

“Not at all, my dear,” Bob replied with a smile. “When I helped Jake I paid my father’s debt and mine. The reward I claim is for indulging you one day in Douglas. When you went on board the Liverpool boat I hated to let you go.”

Mary started down the hill. Her look was grave, and after a few moments she said in a thoughtful voice. “You are a very good sort, Bob, but you must not be rash. All your father and sister know about me is, I am Mrs. Carlyon’s niece.”

“One is not accountable for one’s relations, and the old man is reasonable. He declared he liked the portrait I awkwardly drew; but I’m satisfied he’ll love my model. Then he reckons Hester will marry Jake, and his message to you was, he wants another daughter to rule the mill-house. Hester hoped you would agree.”

“Your people are kind,” said Mary, as if she hesitated. “But your father is rich and important, and I am very poor——”

“You are Queen’s Mary and all your title stands for, and my wife will not be poor,” Bob rejoined. “At the mill we are rather primitive. John Seward is boss because he’s the best man in the gang, and now he gets old he wants me for his chief officer. Yet in the house we have mechanical inventions you don’t use in Scotland, and like good North Americans we admire high cultivation. When my people know you, you’ll rule by your own right. But I must go back. Will you marry me in seven days?”

“It’s impossible, Bob,” said Mary firmly.

“Then we’ll fix it for fourteen days,” said Bob. “I ought not to hustle you, but the old man has waited, and I must get to work. You see, I was in France and at the university; I was wanted at the mill, but he let me go. Then Jake called, and since John Seward pays his debts, he sent me across. Now I think the bill is met, I must join him and pull my proper weight. Can’t you help, my dear?”

Mary was moved and gave Bob her hand. If Seward were like his son, she had no grounds to hesitate.

“The debt is paid in full, and you must go back,” she said. “I think I’ll love your father, and I’ll marry you when you like.”

Bob kissed her, and they went to the post-office. When they returned to the house Mary helped him to persuade her hosts.

A few days after the wedding he stopped his car one afternoon on the hill by Whitriggs. Bob had hoped for another day or two in London, but a telegram called him north. Carlyon had not sent the lawyer the account he agreed to supply, and since Bob and Mary had planned to visit Edinburgh, he resolved to look the fellow up.

"If the risk were mine, I don't think I'd have broken our holiday," he said in an apologetic voice. "However, I undertook to look after Jake's interests and I expect ten minutes will see me through. If you would sooner not go to the house, I'll pick you up when we come back."

"You must do all you agreed to do," Mary replied. "I thought I had done with Whitriggs, but since you are going I am not afraid. Sometimes my aunt was kind. . . ."

The car rolled down the hill. When the driver slowed at the curve round the lawn, nobody was about and all was quiet.

"It's queer," said Bob. "They had a large shooting party. Perhaps the men are at the coverts."

The car stopped, and Bob waited for the driver to ring the bell. A servant opened the arched door, and the driver returned.

"He'll send somebody. The family's not at home."

Bob looked at Mary and imagined the news was some relief. He himself was rather disturbed, but he waited for three or four minutes. At length Mead came down the steps.

"Hello, Mary!" he said with surprise.

"Mrs. Seward!" Bob remarked in a meaning voice.

Mead laughed. "Oh, well, perhaps I ought to have reckoned on that's being so." He leaned against the car, and, facing Mary, resumed: "To know Bob's your husband relieves me from some embarrassment, because I doubt if I could offer you much hospitality."

"We did not mean to bother you," Bob rejoined. "As soon as I've seen Carlyon we go on to Dumfries."

"Your frankness is typical, Bob. However, if you don't mind, I'd like for a few moments to talk to Mrs. Seward."

Bob nodded agreement. He had no use for Mead, but after all he had disliked him mainly because he was Jake's antagonist.

"My apology perhaps does not cover my offense, but on the rather eventful evening when you left Whitriggs I was not altogether sober. Then, although I think I really didn't want to annoy you, I admit I was willing to annoy Jake. Somehow, from the beginning, the fellow irritated me. Perhaps

our dislike was rather instinctive than logical. . . .” He stopped for a moment and then resumed: “Your husband is keener than some people think, and when he was last at Whitriggs I began to see a light. Perhaps you know about our interview. Well, I feel I do not owe Carlyon much, and it looked as if he and Madame worked on my antipathy for Jake. Our fight, so to speak, was stage-managed, although I imagine Jake played up better than his relations thought. The ground is awkward, and perhaps I’m shabby. All the same, one likes to get one’s own back.”

“You are not very noble,” said Mary, with a touch of haughtiness. “I don’t know if I am vindictive, but in a few days I sail for Canada and we shall not meet another time.”

“Where is Carlyon?” Bob inquired.

“I don’t know. If your business is important you ought to have come before. When we got up this morning Carlyon and Madame and the chauffeur had vanished.”

Bob clenched his fist. Carlyon had baffled him, but there was no use in storming, and he asked: “Have you not some notion where he went?”

“I have not,” Mead replied with a laugh. “For some time Madame was not friendly, and Carlyon did not give me his confidence. In fact, it looked as if they had no more use for me, and all I waited for was the reckoning Carlyon delayed. Since a fellow has arrived to seize the furniture, I imagine he has gone for good. Somehow the news got to Dumfries, and a committee of anxious shopkeepers are now disputing in the smoking-room. The servants started after breakfast, all but two optimists who hope somebody will pay their wages.”

“Why did you stay?”

“For one thing, my car was being mended at Dumfries. Then some clothes were at the laundry, and I wanted to collect a few personal belongings. I expect to start in half an hour. If you think Jake is entitled to claim some small articles, you might interview the committee.”

“Oh, shucks!” said Bob. “Jake is not a pawnbroker. Well, there’s no use in talking. Good-by.”

He spoke to the driver and the car rolled away. For a few minutes he was quiet, but when they climbed the hill he smiled.

“After all, we have saved the greater part of Jake’s estate, and in the circumstances I ought to be satisfied. Still I hate to feel Carlyon has beaten me.”

“Where do you think he has gone?” Mary inquired.

“South America, perhaps; but I don’t think I’ll try to find out. You mustn’t be disturbed, my dear.”

“You are generous, Bob,” said Mary. “All the same, you stand for Jake, and you must not, for my sake, allow the man who cheated him to escape.”

Bob put his hand gently on her arm. “I do stand for Jake. It’s important, because he reckons on my doing all that he would do. Well, my line is obvious. Carlyon is gone; all he’s carried off will not break his nephew, and we’ll let him go.”

“You are thinking for me,” said Mary. “Still, I feel Jake would approve.”

The car was near the hilltop and the trees rolled back. In front was a wide moor, on the other side the wintry sunset.

“It’s done with, and we’ll look in front,” said Bob. “We’ll get dinner at Dumfries, and I reckon on a few glorious days in Edinburgh. Then we must start for Glasgow, and the next stop’s Vancouver. Something of a plunge, my dear. I hope you’re not daunted.”

Mary gave him her hand. “For a time all perhaps will be strange, but so long as I go where you go I shall not be afraid.”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled 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.

[The end of *Cross Trails* by Harold Bindloss]