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"PHROSO."

A TALE OF BRAVE DEEDS AND PERILOUS VENTURES.

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CHAPTER XX.

A PUBLIC PROMISE.

ON the evening of the next day I was once again with my faithful friends on board the little yacht. Furious at the trick Mouraki had played them, they rejoiced openly in his fall and mingled their congratulations to me with hearty denunciations of the dead man. In sober truth, we had every reason to be glad. Our new master was of a different stamp from Mouraki; he was a proud, reserved, honest gentleman, with no personal ends to serve. He had informed me that I must remain on the island till he received instructions concerning me, but he encouraged me to hope that my troubles were at last over. Indeed, I gathered from a hint or two which he let fall that Mouraki's end was not likely to be received with great regret in exalted circles. In fact, I have never known a death greeted with more general satisfaction. The soldiers regarded me with quiet approval; to the people of Neopalia I became a hero; everybody seemed to have learnt something at least of the story of my duel with the pasha, and everybody had been (so it now appeared) on my side.

I could not walk up the street without a shower of benedictions; the islanders fear-

lessly displayed their liking for me by way of declaring their hatred for Mouraki's memory and their exultation in his fitting death. In these demonstrations they were not interfered with, and the captain went so far as to shut his eyes judiciously when, under cover of night, they accorded Demetri the tribute of a public funeral. To this function I did not go, although I was informed that my presence was confidently expected; but I sought out Panayiota and told her how her lover died. She heard the story with Spartan calm and pride.

Yet there were shadows on our new-born prosperity. Most lenient and gracious to me, the captain preserved a severe and rigorous attitude toward Phroso. He sent her to her own house—or my house, as with amiable persistence he called it—and kept her there under guard. Her case would also be considered, he said, and he had forwarded my exoneration of her, together with the account of Mouraki's death; but he feared very much that she would not be allowed to remain in the island: she would be a centre of discontent there. As for my proposal to restore the island to her, he assured me that it would not be listened to for a moment. If I declined to keep the island, a proper and loyal lord would probably be selected, and Phroso would be deported.

"Where to?" I asked.

"Really, I don't know," said the captain. "It is but a small matter, my lord, and I have not troubled my superiors with any recommendation on the subject."

As he spoke he rose to go; he had been paying us a visit on the yacht, where, in obedience to his advice, I had taken up my abode. Denny, who was sitting near, gave a curious sort of laugh. I frowned fiercely; the captain looked from one to the other of us in bland curiosity.

"You take an interest in the girl?" he said, in a tone in which surprise struggled with civility; and again came Denny's half-smothered laugh.

"An interest in her?" said I irritably. "Well, I suppose I do. It looked like it when I took her through that infernal passage, didn't it?"

The captain smiled apologetically, and pursued his way towards the door. "I will try to obtain lenient treatment for her," said he, and passed out. I was left alone with Denny, who chose at this moment to begin to whistle. I glared most ill-humoredly at him. He stopped whistling, and remarked:

"By this time to-morrow our friends at home will be taking off their mourning; they will read in the papers that Lord Wheatley is not dead of fever at Neopalía, and they will not read that he has fallen a victim to the misguided patriotism of the islanders. In fact, they will be prepared to kill the fatted calf for him."

It was all perfectly true, both what Denny said and what he implied without saying. But I found no answer to make to it.

"What a happy ending it is," said Denny.

"Uncommonly," I growled, lighting a cigar.

After this there was a long silence. I smoked, Denny whistled. I saw that he was determined to say nothing more explicit unless I gave him a lead, but his whole manner exuded moral disapproval. The consciousness of his feelings kept me obstinately dumb.

"Going to stay here long?" he asked at last, in a wonderfully careless tone.

"Well, there's no hurry, is there?" I retorted aggressively.

"No; only I should have thought—well, nothing."

Again silence. Then Watkins opened the door of the cabin and announced the return of the captain. I was surprised to see him again so soon. I was more surprised when he came at me with out-

stretched hand and a smile of mingled amusement and reproof on his face.

"My dear lord," he exclaimed, seizing my defenceless hand. "Is this treating me quite fairly? So far as a word from you went, I was left completely in the dark. Of course, I understand now, but it was an utter surprise to me." And he shook his head with playful reproach.

"If you understand now, I confess you have the advantage of me," I returned with some stiffness. "Pray, sir, what has occurred? No doubt, it is something remarkable; I have learned to rely on Neopalía for that."

"It was remarkable in my eyes, I admit, and rather startling. But of course I acquiesced. In fact, my dear lord, it materially alters the situation. As your wife, she will be in a very different—"

"Hullo!" cried Denny, leaping up from the bench where he had been sitting.

"In a very different position, indeed," pursued the captain blandly. "We should have, if I may say so, a guarantee for her good behavior. Then we should have you to look to—a great security, as I need not tell you."

"My dear sir," said I, in exasperated pleading, "you don't seem to think you need tell me anything. Pray inform me of what has occurred and what this wonderful thing is that makes so much change."

"Indeed," said he; "if I had surprised a secret, I would apologize. But it is evidently known to all the islanders."

"Well, but I'm not an islander," I cried in growing fury.

The captain sat down, lit a cigarette very deliberately, and observed:

"It is perhaps stupid of me not to have thought of it. She is, of course, a beautiful girl, but hardly, if I may say so, your equal in position, my lord."

I jumped up and caught him by the shoulder. He might order me under arrest if he liked, but he should tell me what had happened first.

"What has occurred?" I reiterated. "Since you left us—what?"

"A deputation of the islanders, headed by their priests, came to ask my leave for the inhabitants to go up to the house and see their lady."

"Yes, yes. What for?"

"To offer her their congratulations on her betrothal—"

"What?"

"And their assurances of loyalty to her and to her husband for her sake. Oh, it simplifies the matter very much."

"Does it? And did you tell them they might go?"

"Was there any objection? Certainly. Certainly I told them they might go, and I added that I heard with great gratification that a marriage so—"

What the captain had said to the deputation I did not wait to hear. No doubt it was something highly dignified and appropriate, for he was evidently much pleased with himself. But before he could possibly have finished so ornate a sentence I was on the deck of the yacht. I heard Denny push back his chair; whether merely in wonder or in order to follow me I did not know. I leapt from the yacht on to the jetty, and started to run up the street nearly as quickly as I had run down it on the day that Mouraki was kind enough to send my friends a-fishing. At all costs I must stop the demonstrations of delight which the inconvenient innocence of these islanders was preparing.

Alas, the street was a desert! The movements of the captain were always leisurely; the impetuous islanders had wasted no time; they had got a start of me, and running up the hill after them was no joke. Against my will I was at last obliged to drop into a walk, and thus pursued my way doggedly, thinking in gloomy despair how everything conspired to push me along the road which my honor and my pledged word closed to me. Was ever man so tempted? Did ever circumstances so conspire with his own wishes, or fate make duty seem more hard?

I turned the corner of the road that led to the old house. It was here that I had first heard Phroso's voice in the darkness; here where, from the window of the hall, I had seen her lithe, graceful figure, when she came in her boy's clothes to raid my cows. A little further on was where I had said farewell to her when she went back, the grant of Neopalía in her hand, to soften the hearts of her turbulent countrymen; and where Mouraki had tried her with his guile, and intimidated her with his harshness. And there was the house where I had declared to the pasha that she should be my wife. How sweet that saying sounded in my remembering ears! Yet I swear I did not waver. Many have called me a fool for it since. I know nothing about that. Times change, and people are very wise nowadays. My father was a fool, I dare say, to give thousands to his spendthrift schoolfellow, just because he happened to have said he would.

I saw them now, the bright, picturesque

crowd that thronged round the door of the house; and on the step of the threshold I saw her, standing there, tall and slim, with one hand resting on the arm of Kortés's sister. A loud cry rose from the people; she did not seem to speak. With set teeth I walked on. Now some one in the circle caught sight of me. There was another eager cry, a stir, shouts, gestures; then they turned and ran to me; and, before I could move or speak, a dozen strong hands were about me. They swung me up on their shoulders and carried me along; the rest waved their hands and cheered; they blessed me and called me their lord; the women laughed and the girls shot merry, shy glances at me. Thus they bore me in triumph to Phroso's feet. Surely I was indeed a hero in Neapolía to-day, for they had heard that through me their lady should be left to them and their island escape the punishment they feared. So they sang One-Eyed Alexander's chant no more, but burst into a glad hymn—an epithalamium—as I knelt at Phroso's feet and did not dare to lift my eyes to her fair face.

"Here's a mess!" I groaned, wondering what they had said to my poor Phroso.

Then a sudden silence fell on them. I looked up in wonder, and I saw that Phroso had raised her hand and was about to speak to them. She did not look at me; nay, she did not look at them. Her eyes were fixed on the sea that she loved. Then her voice came low, but clear:

"Friends—for all are friends here, and there are no strangers—once before in the face of all of you I have told my love for my lord, and my lord did not know that it was true; and I have not told him that it was true till I tell him here to-day. But you talk foolishly when you greet me as my lord's bride. For in his country he is a great man, and owns great wealth. But Neopalía is very small and poor. I am but a poor girl to him, though you call me your lady."

Here she paused an instant, and then went on, her voice sinking a little lower, and growing almost dreamy, as if she let herself drift idly on the waves of fancy.

"Is it strange to speak to you—to you, my brothers and sisters of our island? I do not know—I love to speak to you all. For poor as I am and as our island is, I think sometimes that had my lord come here a free man he would have loved me. But his heart was not his own, and the lady he loves waits for him at home, and he will go to her. So wish me joy no more on what cannot be."

Then, very suddenly, before I or any of them could move or speak, she withdrew inside the threshold, and the sister of Kortés swiftly closed the door. I was on my feet as it shut, and I stood facing it, my back to the islanders.

Among them at first there was an amazed silence, but soon voices began to be heard. I turned round and met their gaze. The strong yoke of Mouraki was off them; their fear had gone, and with it their meekness; they were again in the fierce, impetuous mood of St. Tryphon's day; they were exasperated at their disappointment, enraged to find the plan which left Phroso to them and relieved them of the threatened advent of a government nominee brought to nothing.

"They will take her away," said one.

"They will send us a rascally Turk," cried another.

"He shall hear the death chant then," menaced a third.

Then their anger, seeking a victim, turned on me. I do not know that I had the right to consider myself an entirely innocent victim.

"He has won her love by fraud," muttered one to another, with evil-disposed glances and ominous frowns.

I thought they were going to handle me roughly, and I felt for the revolver which the captain had been kind enough to restore to me. But a new turn was given to their thoughts by a tall fellow with long hair and flashing eyes, who leapt out from the middle of the throng, crying loudly:

"Is not Mouraki dead? Why need we fear? Shall we wait idle while our lady is taken from us? To the shore, islanders. Where is fear, since Mouraki is dead?"

His words lit a torch that blazed up furiously. In an instant they were aflame with the mad notion of attacking the soldiers and the gunboat. No voice was raised to point out the hopelessness of such an attempt, the certain death and the heavy penalties that must wait on it. The death chant broke out again, mingled with exhortations to turn and march against the soldiers, with encouragements to the tall fellow—Orestes they called him—to put himself at their head. He was not loth.

"Let us go and get our guns and our knives," he cried; "and then to the shore!"

"And this man?" called half a dozen, pointing at me.

"When we have driven out the soldiers we will deal with him," said Master Ores-

tes. "If our lady will have him for a husband he shall wed her."

A shout of approval greeted this arrangement, and they drew together, in a sort of rude column, the women making a fringe to it. But I could not let them march on their destruction without a word of warning. I sprang on to the raised step where Phroso had stood, just outside the door, and cried:

"You fools! The guns of the ship will mow you down before you can touch a hair of the head of a single soldier."

A deep, derisive groan met my attempt at dissuasion.

"On, on!" they cried.

"It's certain death," I shouted; and now I saw one or two of the women hesitate and look first at me and then at one another with doubt and fear. But Orestes would not listen, and called again to them to take the road. Thus we were when the door behind me opened, and Phroso was again by my side. She knew how matters went, and her eyes were wild with terror and distress.

"Stop them, my lord; stop them!" she implored.

For answer I took my revolver from my pocket, saying, "I'll do what I can."

"No, no, not like that! That would be your death as well as theirs."

"Come," cried Orestes, in the pride of his sudden elevation to leadership, "come, follow me. I will lead you to victory."

"You fools, you fools!" I groaned. "In an hour half of you will be dead!"

No, they would not listen. Only the women now laid imploring hands on the arms of husbands and brothers—useless loving restraints angrily flung off.

"Stop them, stop them," prayed Phroso.

"By any means, my lord, by any means."

"There is only one way," said I.

"Whatever the way may be," she urged; for now the column was facing round toward the harbor. Orestes had taken his place, swelling with importance and eager to display his prowess. In a word, Neopalia was in revolt again, and the death chant threatened to swell out in all its barbaric, simple savagery at any moment.

There was nothing else for it. I must temporize, and that word is generally, and was in this case, the equivalent of a much shorter one. I could not leave these mad fools to rush on ruin. A plan was in my head and I gave it play. I took a pace forward, raised my hand, and cried:

"Hear me before you march, Neopalians. For I am your friend."

My voice gained me a minute's silence and the column stood still, though Orestes chafed impatiently at the delay.

"You are in haste, men of Neopalia," said I. "Indeed, you are always in haste. You were in haste to kill me who had done you no harm. You are in haste to kill yourselves by marching into the mouth of the great gun of the ship. In truth, I wonder that any of you are still alive. But here in this matter you are most of all in haste; for having heard what the Lady Phroso said, you have not asked nor waited to hear what I say, but have at once gone mad, all of you, and chosen the maddest among you and made him your leader."

I do not think that they had quite expected this style of speech; they had looked for passionate reproaches or playful entreaties. Cool scorn and chaff put them rather at a loss, and my reference to Orestes, who looked sour enough, won me a hesitating laugh.

"And then, all you mad together, off you go, leaving me here, the only sane man in the place! For am not I sane? Aye, not mad enough, at least, to leave the fairest lady in the world when she says she loves me." I took Phroso's hand and kissed it. It lay limp and cold in mine. "For my home," I went on, "is a long way off, and it is long since I have seen the lady of whom you have heard; and a man's heart will not be denied." Again I kissed Phroso's hand, but I dared not look her in the face.

My meaning had dawned on them now. There was an instant's silence, the last relic of doubt and puzzle. Then a sudden loud shout went up from them. Orestes alone was sullen and mute, for my surrender deposed him from his brief eminence. Again and again they shouted in joy. I knew that their shouts must reach nearly to the harbor. Men and women crowded round me and seized my hand; nobody seemed to make any bones about the "lady who waited" for me. They were single-hearted patriots, these Neopalians.

I had observed that virtue in them several times before, and their behavior now confirmed my opinion of them. But there was, of course, a remarkable difference in the manifestation. Before, I had been the object, now I was the subject; for, by announcing my intention of marrying Phroso, I took rank as a Neopalian. Indeed, for a minute or two I was afraid that the post of generalissimo, made vacant by Orestes's

deposition, would be forcibly thrust upon me.

Happily, their enthusiasm took a course which was more harmless, although it was hardly less embarrassing. They made a ring round Phroso and me, and insisted on our embracing one another in the glare of publicity. Yet somehow, I forgot them all for a moment—they all and more than them all—while I held her in my arms.

Now it chanced that the captain, Denny, and Hogvardt chose this moment for appearing on the road, in the course of a leisurely approach to the house, and they beheld Phroso and myself in a very sentimental attitude on the doorstep, with the islanders standing around in high delight. Denny's amazed "Hallo!" warned me of what had happened. The islanders, their enmity toward the suzerain power allayed as quickly as it had been roused, ran to the captain to impart the joyful news. He came up to me and bestowed his sanction by a shake of the hand.

"But why did you behave so strangely, my lord, when I wished you joy an hour or two ago on the boat?" he asked; and it was a very natural question.

"Oh, the truth is," said I, "that there was a little difficulty in the way then."

"A lovers' quarrel?" he smiled.

"Well, something like it," I admitted.

"Everything is quite right now, I hope," he said politely.

"Well, very nearly," said I, and then I met Denny's eyes.

"Am I also to congratulate you?" said Denny coldly.

There was no opportunity of explaining matters to him, the captain was too near.

"I shall be very glad if you will," I said. "And if Hogvardt will also."

Hogvardt shrugged his shoulders, raised his brows, smiled, and observed:

"I trust you are acting for the best, my lord."

Denny made no answer at all. He kicked the ground with his foot. I knew very well what was in Denny's mind. Denny was of my family on his mother's side; and Denny's eye asked, "Where is the word of a Wheatley?" All this I realized fully, and I read his mind then more clearly than I could read my own. For had we been alone and had he put to me the plain question, "Do you mean to make her your wife, or are you playing another trick?" by heaven, I should not have known what to answer! I had begun a trick; the plan was to persuade the islanders into dispersing quietly by my pretence,

and then to slip away quietly myself, trusting to their good sense—although a broken reed, yet the only resource—to make them accept an accomplished fact. But was that my mind now, since I had held Phroso in my arms and her lips had met mine in the kiss that the islanders hailed as the pledge of our union?

I did not know. I saw Phroso turn and go into the house again. The captain spoke to Denny. I saw him point up to the window of the room which Mouraki had occupied. He went in. Denny motioned Hogvardt to his side, and they also went into the house, without asking me to accompany them. Gradually the throng of islanders dispersed. Orestes flung off in sullen disappointment; the men, those who had the knives carefully hiding them, walked down the road like peaceful citizens; the women went away laughing, chattering, gossiping, delighted, as women always are with a love affair. Thus I was left alone in front of the house. It was late afternoon and the clouds had gathered over the sea. The air was very still and no sound struck my ear, except the wash of the waves on the shore. There I stood, fighting the battle, for how long I do not know; the struggle within me was very sore. On either side seemed now to lie a path that it soiled my feet to tread; on the one was a broken pledge, on the other a piece of trickery and knavishness. The joy of a love that could be mine only through dishonor was imperfect joy; yet, if that love could not be mine, life seemed too empty a thing to live. The voices of the two sounded in my ear—the light, merry prattle and the calmer, sweeter voice. Ah, this island of mine! what things it put upon a man!

At last I felt a hand laid on my shoulder; I turned, and in the quick-gathering dusk of the evening I saw Kortés's sister. She looked long and earnestly into my face.

"Well?" said I. "What is it now?"

"She must see you, my lord," answered the woman. "She must see you now and at once."

I looked again at the harbor and the sea, trying to quell the tumult of my thought and to resolve what I would do. I could find no course and settle on no resolution.

"Yes, she must see me," said I at last, and I could say nothing else.

The woman moved away, a strange bewilderment showing in her kind eyes. Again I was left alone to my restless self-communings. I heard people moving to

and fro in the house. I heard the window of Mouraki's room, where the captain was, closed with a decisive hand. Then I became aware of some one approaching me. I turned and saw Phroso's white dress gleaming through the gloom, and her face nearly as white above it.

Yes, the time had come; but I was not ready.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WORD OF VARIOUS MEANINGS.

SHE came up to me swiftly, and without hesitation. I had looked for some embarrassment, but there was none in her face. She met my eyes full and square, and began to speak to me at once.

"My lord," she said, "I must ask one thing of you. I must lay one more burden on you. After to-day, I dare not be here when my countrymen learn how they are deluded, for I should be ashamed to face them; and I dare not trust myself to the Turks, for I do not know what they would do with me. Will you take me with you, to Athens, or to some other port from which I can reach Athens? I can elude the guards here; I shall be no trouble. You need only tell me when your boat will start, and give me a corner to live in on board. Indeed, I grieve to ask more of you, for you have done so much for me; but my trouble is great, and—what is it, my lord?"

I had moved my hand to stop her. She had acted in the one way in which, had it been to save my life, I could not have. She put what had passed utterly out of the way, treating it as the merest trick. My part in it was to her the merest trick; of hers she said nothing. Had hers, then, been a trick also? My blood grew hot at the thought; I could not endure it.

"When your countrymen learn how they have been deluded!" said I, repeating her words. "Deluded in what?"

"In the trick we played on them, my lord, to—to persuade them to disperse."

I took a step towards her, and my voice shook as I said:

"Was it all a trick, Phroso?" For at this moment I set above everything else in the world a fresh assurance of her love. I would force it from her, sooner than not have it.

She answered me with questioning eyes and a sad little smile.

"Are we then betrothed?" she said, in mournful mockery.

I was close by her now. I did not touch her, but I bent a little, and my face was near her.

"Was it a trick to-day, and a trick on St. Tryphon's day also?" I asked.

She gave one startled glance at my face, and now her eyes dropped to the ground. She made no answer to my question.

"Was it all a trick, Phroso?" I asked, in entreaty, in insistence, in the wild longing to hear her love declared once, here, to me alone, where nobody could hear, nobody impair its sweet secrecy.

Phroso's answer came now, set to the accompaniment of the saddest, softest murmuring laugh.

"Ah, my dear lord, must you hear it again? Am I not twice shamed already?"

"Be shamed yet once again," I whispered; and then I saw the light of gladness master the misty sorrow in her eyes, as I had seen once before. And I greeted it, whispering:

"Yes, a thousand times; a thousand times!"

"My dear lord," she said, but then she sprang back, and the brightness was clouded again, as she stood aloof regarding me in speechless, distressed puzzle.

"But, my lord," she murmured, so low that I scarcely heard. Then she took refuge in a return to her request: "You won't leave me here, will you? You will take me somewhere where I can be safe? I—I'm afraid of these men, even though the pasha is dead."

I took no notice of the request she repeated. I seemed unable to speak or to do anything else but look into her eyes; and I said, a tone of awe in my voice, "You have the most wonderful eyes in all the world, Phroso."

"My lord," murmured Phroso, dropping envious lids. But I knew she would open them soon again, and so she did.

"Yes, in all the wide world," said I, "and I want to hear it again."

As we talked we had moved little by little, and now we were at the side of the house, in the deep, dull shadow of it. Yet the eyes I praised pierced the gloom and shone in the darkness; and suddenly I felt arms about my neck, clasping me tightly. Her breath was on my cheek, coming quick and unevenly; and she whispered:

"Yes, you shall hear it, again and again and again, for I am not ashamed now. For I know; yes, I know. I love you, I love you, ah, how I love you!" Her whispers found answers in mine, and I held her as though against all the world; and all the world

was in that moment and there was nothing else than that moment in all the world. Had a man told me then that I had felt love before, I would have laughed in his face—the fool!

But then Phroso drew back again; the brief rapture, free from all past or future, all thought or doubt, left her, and, in leaving her, forsook me also; and she stood again over against me, murmuring:

"But, my lord—"

I knew well what she would say, and for an instant I stood silent; the world hung for us on the cast of my next words.

"But, my lord, the lady who waits for you over the sea?" There sounded a note of fear in the softly breathed whisper that the night carried to my ear. In an instant, before I could answer, Phroso came near to me, and laid one hand on my arm, and spoke gently and quickly. "Yes, I know, I see, I understand," she said, "and I thank you, my lord; and I thank God, my dear lord, that you told me, and did not leave without showing me your love. For though I must be very unhappy, yet I shall be proud; and in the long nights I shall think of this dear island and of you, though you will both be far away. Yes, I thank heaven you told me, my dear lord." And she bent her head, that should have bent to no man, and kissed my hand.

But I snatched my hand hastily away, and I sprang to her and caught her again in my arms, and again kissed her lips, for my resolve was made. I would not let her go. Yet I spoke no word, and she did not understand, but thought that I kissed her in farewell, for the tears were on her face and wetted my lips; and she clung to me as though something were tearing her from me and must soon sunder us apart—so greedy was her grasp on me. And then I opened my mouth to whisper in her ear the words that would bid defiance to the thing that was tearing her away and rivet her life to mine.

But hark! There was a cry, a startled exclamation, and the sound of footsteps. My name was shouted loud and eagerly. I knew Denny's voice. Phroso slid from my relaxed arms and drew back into the deepest shadow.

"I'll be back soon," I whispered, and with a last pressure of her hand, that was warm now and answered to my grasp, I stepped out of the shelter of the wall and stood in front of the house. Denny was on the doorstep; the door was open, and the light from the lamps in the hall flooded the night and fell full on my face as I

walked up to him. And on sight of me he seemed to forget his own errand and his own eagerness, for he caught me by the shoulder and stared at me, crying:

"Heavens, man, you're as white as a sheet! Have you seen a ghost? Does Constantine walk—or Mouraki?"

"Fifty ghosts would be a joke to what I've been through. My God, I never had such a time! What do you want? What did you call me for? I can't stay. She's waiting." For now I did not care; Denny and all Neopalia might know now.

"Yes, but she must wait a little," he said. "You must come into the house and come up stairs."

"I can't," I said obstinately. "I—I—I can't, Denny."

"You must. Don't be a fool, Charley. It's important; the captain is waiting for you."

His face seemed big with news—what it might be I could not tell—but the hint of it was enough to make me catch hold of him, crying: "What is it? I'll come."

"That's right. Come along." And he turned and led the way rapidly through the old hall, and up the stairs I followed him, my mind whirling through a cloud of possibilities.

The quiet, businesslike aspect of the room into which Denny led the way did something to sober me. I pulled myself together, seeking to hide my feelings under a mask of carelessness. The captain sat at the table with a mass of papers surrounding him; he appeared to be examining them, and, as he read, his lips curved in surprise or contempt.

"This Mouraki was a cunning fellow," said he, "but if anyone had chanced to get hold of this box of his while he was alive he would not have enjoyed even so poor a post as he thought his governorship. Indeed, Lord Wheatley, had you been actually a party to his death I think you need have feared nothing when some of these papers had found their way to the eyes of the government. We are well rid of him, indeed! But then, as I always say, these Armenians, though they are clever dogs—"

But I had not come to hear a Turk discourse on Armenia, and I broke in, with an impatience that I could not altogether conceal:

"I beg your pardon, but is that all you wanted to say to me?"

"I should have thought that it was of some importance to you," he observed.

"Certainly," said I, regaining my com-

posure a little. "But your courtesy and kindness had already reassured me."

He bowed his acknowledgments, and proceeded in a most leisurely tone, sorting the papers and documents before him into orderly heaps.

"On the death of the pasha, the government of the island having temporarily devolved on me, I thought it my duty to examine his Excellency's—curse the dog!—his Excellency's despatch box, with the result that I have discovered very remarkable evidence of the schemes which he dared to entertain. With this, however, I need not, perhaps, trouble you."

"I would not intrude into it for the world," I said.

"I also discovered," he pursued, in undisturbed leisure and placidity, "among the pasha's papers a letter addressed to—"

"Me!" And I sprang forward.

"No; to your cousin—to this gentleman. Pursuing what I conceived to be my duty—and I must trust to Mr. Swinton to forgive me—" Here the exasperating fellow paused, looked at Denny, waited for a bow from Denny, duly received it, duly and with ceremony returned it, sighed as though he were much relieved at Denny's complaisance, cleared his throat, arranged a little heap of papers on his left hand, and at last—oh, at last—went on.

"This letter, I say, in pursuance of what I conceived to be my duty—"

"Yes, yes, your duty, of course. Clearly your duty! Yes?"

"I read. It appeared, however, to contain nothing of importance."

"Then, why the deuce— I—I mean—I beg your pardon."

"But merely matters of private concern. But I am not warranted in letting it out of my hands. It will have to be delivered to the government with the rest of the pasha's papers. I have, however, allowed Mr. Swinton to read it. He says that it concerns you, Lord Wheatley, more than himself. I therefore propose to ask him to read it to you (I can decipher English but not speak it with facility) in my presence." With this, he handed an envelope to Denny.

We had got to it at last.

"For heaven's sake be quick about it, my dear boy," I cried, and I seated myself on the table, swinging my leg to and fro in a fury of restless impatience. The captain eyed my agitated body with profound disapproval.

Denny took the letter from its envelope and read: "London, May 21." Then he

paused and remarked: "We got here on the 7th, you know." I nodded hastily, and he went on: "My dear Denny.—Oh, how awful this is! I can hardly bear to think of it! Poor, poor fellow! Mamma is terribly grieved, and I of course even more. Both mamma and I feel that it makes it so much worse somehow that this news should come only three days after he must have got mamma's letter. Mamma says that it doesn't really make any difference, and that if her letter was wise then, this terrible news can't alter that. I suppose it doesn't really, but it seems to, doesn't it? Oh, do write directly and tell me that he wasn't very unhappy about it when he had that horrible fever. There's a big blot—because I'm crying! I know you thought I didn't care about him, but I did—though not (as mamma says) in one way, really. Do you think he forgave me? It would kill me if I thought he didn't. Do write soon. I suppose you will bring poor dear Charley home? Please tell me he didn't think very badly of me. Mamma joins with me in sincerest sympathy.—Yours most sincerely, Beatrice Kennett Hipgrave. P. S. Mr. Bennett Hamlyn has just called; he is awfully grieved about poor dear Charley. I always think of him as Charley still, you know. Do write."

There was a long pause. Then Denny observed, in a satirical tone:

"To be thought of still as 'Charley' is, after all, something."

"But what the devil does it mean?" I cried, leaping from the table.

"I suppose you will bring poor dear Charley home," repeated Denny, in a meditative tone. "Well, it looks rather more like it than it did a few days ago, I must admit."

"Denny, Denny, if you love me, what's it all about? I haven't had any letter from—"

"Mamma? No, we've had no letter from mamma. But then, we haven't had any letters from anybody."

"Then I'm hanged if I—" I began in bewildered despondency.

"But, Charley," interrupted Denny, "perhaps mamma sent a letter to—Mouraki Pasha!"

"To Mouraki?"

"This letter of mine found its way to Mouraki."

"All letters," observed the captain, who was leaning back quietly, and staring at the ceiling, "would pass through his hands, if he chose to make them."

"Good heavens!" I cried, and I sprang

forward. The hint was enough. In an instant my busy, nervous, shaking hands were ruining the neat piles of documents which the captain had so carefully reared in front and on either side of him. I dived, tossed, fumbled, rummaged, scattered, strewn, tore; the captain, incapable of resisting my excited energy, groaned in helpless despair at the ruin of his evening's work. And Denny, having watched me for a few minutes, suddenly broke out into a peal of laughter. I stopped for an instant, to glare reproof of his ill-timed mirth, and turned to my wild search again.

The search seemed useless; either Mouraki had not received a letter from Mrs. Bennett Hipgrave or he had done what I myself always did with the good lady's communications—destroyed it immediately after reading it. I examined every scrap of paper, official documents, private notes (the captain was very nervous when I insisted on looking through these for a trace of Mrs. Hipgrave's name), lists of stores, in a word, the whole contents of Mouraki's despatch boxes.

"It's a blank!" I cried, stepping back at last, in disappointment.

"Yes, it's gone; but, depend upon it, he had it," said Denny.

A sudden recollection flashed across me—the remembrance of the subtle, amused smile with which Mouraki had spoken of the lady who was most anxious about me, my future wife. He must have known then, he must even have had Mrs. Hipgrave's letter in his possession. He had played a deliberate trick on me by suppressing the letter; hence his fury when I announced my intention of disregarding the ties that bound me, a fury that had for the moment conquered his cool cunning and led him into violent threats. At that moment, when I realized the man's audacious villainy, when I thought of the struggle he had caused to me and the pain to Phroso—well, just then, I came near to canonizing Demetri, and nearer still to grudging him his exploit.

"What was in the letter, then?" I cried to Denny.

"Read my letter again," said he, and he threw it across to me.

I read it again. I was cooler now, and the meaning of it stood out plain and not to be doubted. Mrs. Bennett Hipgrave's letter, her wise letter, had broken off my engagement to her daughter. The fact was plain; all that was missing, destroyed by the caution or the carelessness of Mouraki Pasha, was the reason; and the reason

I could supply for myself. I reached my conclusion and looked again at Denny.

"Allow me to congratulate you," said Denny ironically.

Man is a curious creature. I may have made that reflection before. I offer no apology for that; the more I see of myself and of my friends the more convinced I grow of it. Here was the thing for which I had been hoping and praying, the one great thing that I asked of fate, the single boon which fortune enviously withheld. Here was freedom—divine freedom! Yet what I actually said to Denny, in reply to his felicitations, was:

"Hang the girl! She's jilted me!" And I said it with considerable annoyance.

The captain, who studied English in his spare moments, here interposed, asking suavely:

"Pray, my dear Lord Wheatley, what is the meaning of that word—jilted?"

"The meaning of jilted?" said Denny. "He wants to know the meaning of jilted, Charley."

I looked from one to the other of them; then I said:

"I think I'll go and ask," and I started for the door. The captain's expression accused me of rudeness. Denny caught me by the arm.

"It's not decent yet," said he, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"It happened nearly a month ago," I pleaded. "I've had time to get over it, Denny; a man can't wear the willow all his life."

"You old humbug!" said Denny, but he let me go.

I was not long in going. I darted down the stairs. I suppose a man deceives himself, and will find excuses for himself where others may only find matter for laughter; but I remember congratulating myself on not having spoken the final words to Phroso before Denny interrupted us. Well, I would speak them now; I was free to speak them now; and suddenly, in this thought, the vexation at being jilted vanished.

"It amounts," said I to myself, as I reached the hall, "to no more than a fortunate coincidence of opinion." And I passed through the door and turned sharp round to the left.

She was there waiting for me, and waiting eagerly, it seemed; for before I could speak she ran to me, holding out her hands, and she cried in a low, urgent whisper, full of entreaty:

"My lord, I have thought. I have thought while you were in the house. You must not do this, my lord. Yes, I know—now I know—that you love me, but you must not do this. My lord's honor must not be stained for my sake."

I could not resist it. And I cannot justify it. I assumed a terribly sad expression.

"You have really come to that conclusion, Phroso?" I asked.

"Yes. Ah, how difficult it is! But my lord's honor—ah, don't tempt me! You will take me to Athens, will you not? And then—"

"And then," said I, "you will leave me?"

"Yes," said Phroso, with a little catch in her voice.

"And what shall I do, left alone?"

"Go back," murmured Phroso almost inaudibly.

"Go back—thinking of those wonderful eyes?"

"No, no, thinking of—"

"The lady who waits for me over the sea?"

"Yes. And, my lord, I pray that you will find happiness."

There was a moment's silence. Phroso did not look at me, but then I did look at Phroso.

"Then you refuse, Phroso, to have anything to say to me?"

No answer at all reached me. I came nearer, being afraid that I might not have heard her answer.

"And what am I to do for a wife, Phroso?" I asked forlornly. "For, Phroso—"

"Ah, my lord, why do you take my hand again?"

"Did I, Phroso? Because, Phroso, the lady who waits over the sea—it is a charmingly poetic phrase, upon my word!"

"You laugh!" murmured Phroso in aggrieved protest and wonder.

"Did I really laugh, Phroso? Well, I am happy, so I may laugh."

"Happy?" she whispered; and then at last her eyes were drawn to mine in mingled hope and anguish of questioning.

"The lady who waited over the sea," said I, "waits no longer, Phroso."

The wonderful eyes grew more wonderful in their amazed widening; and Phroso, laying a hand gently on my arm, said:

"She waits no longer! My lord, she is dead?"

This confident inference was extremely flattering. There was evidently but one

thing that could end the patient waiting of the lady who waited!

"On the contrary, she thinks that I am. Constantine spread news of my death."

"Ah, yes."

"He said that I died of fever."

"And she believes it?"

"She does, Phroso; and she appears to be really very sorry."

"Ah, but what joy will be hers when she learns—"

"But, Phroso, before she thought I was dead she had made up her mind to wait no longer."

"To wait no longer? What do you mean, my lord? Ah, tell me what you mean."

"What has happened to me here, in Neopalia, Phroso?"

"Many strange things, my lord—some most terrible."

"And some most—most what, Phroso? One thing that has happened to me has, I think, happened also to the lady who waited."

Phroso's hand—the one I had not taken—was suddenly stretched out, and she spoke in a voice that sounded half stifled:

"Tell me, my lord, tell me; I cannot endure it longer."

Then I grew grave and said:

"I am free. She has given me my freedom."

"She has set you free?"

"She loves me no longer, I suppose, if she ever did."

"Oh, but, my lord, it is impossible!"

"Should you think it so? Phroso, it is true—true that I can come to you now."

She understood at last. For a moment she was silent; and I, silent also, pierced through the darkness to her wondering face. Once she stretched out her arms; then there came a little, long, low laugh, and she put her hands together and thrust them, thus clasped, between mine that closed on them.

"My lord, my lord, my lord," said Phroso.

Suddenly I heard a low, mournful chant coming up from the harbor, the moan of mourning voices. The sound struck across the stillness that had followed her last words.

"What is that?" I asked. "What are they doing down there?"

"Did you not know? The bodies of my cousin and of Kortés came forth at sunset from the secret pool into which they fell; and they bring them now to bury them by the church. They mourn Kortés because

they loved him; and Constantine also they feign to mourn, because he was of the house of the Stefanopouloi."

We stood for some minutes listening to the chant that rose and fell and echoed among the hills. Its sad cadences, mingled here and there with the note of sustained hope, seemed a fitting end to the story—to the stormy days that were rounded off at last by peace and joy to us who lived and by the embraces of the all-hiding, all-pardoning earth for those who had fallen. I put my arm round Phroso and, thus at last together, we listened till the sounds died away in low echoes and silence fell again on the island.

"Ah, the dear island!" said Phroso, softly. "You will not take me away from it forever? It is my lord's island now, and it will be faithful to him, even as I myself; for God has been very good, and my lord is very good."

I looked at her, and her cheeks were again wet with tears. As I watched a drop fall from her eyes, I said to her softly:

"That shall be the last, Phroso, till we part again."

A loud cough from the front of the house interrupted us. I advanced, beckoning to Phroso to follow, and wearing, I am afraid, the apologetic look usual under such circumstances. I found Denny and the captain.

"Are you coming down to the yacht, Charley?" asked Denny.

"Er—in a few minutes, Denny."

"Shall I wait for you?"

"Oh, I think I can find my way."

Denny laughed, and caught me by the hand. Then he passed on to Phroso. I do not, however, know what he said to her, for at this moment the captain touched my shoulder and demanded my attention.

"I beg your pardon," said he, "but you never told me the meaning of that word."

"What word, my dear Captain?"

"Why, the word you used of the lady's letter—of what she had done."

"Oh, you mean 'jilted'?"

"Yes, that's it."

"It is," said I, after a moment's reflection, "a word of very various meanings."

"Ah," said the captain, with a comprehending nod.

"Yes, very various. In one sense it means to make a man miserable."

"Yes, I see. To make him unhappy."

"And in another to make him—to make him, Captain, the luckiest beggar alive."

"It is a strange word," observed the captain meditatively.

"I don't know about that," said I. "Good night."

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE MORE RUN.

THE next morning came bright and beautiful, with a pleasant, fresh breeze. It was just the day for a run in the yacht. So I thought when I mounted on deck at eight o'clock in the morning. Watkins was there, staring meditatively at the harbor and the street beyond. Perceiving me, he touched his hat and observed:

"It's a queer little place, my lord."

My eyes followed the direction of Watkins's, and I gave a slight sigh.

"Do you think the island is going to be quiet now, Watkins?" I asked.

I do not think that he quite understood my question, for he said that the weather looked like being fine. I had not meant the weather; my sigh was paid to the ending of Neopalía's exciting caprices; for though the end was prosperous, I was a little sorry that we had come to the end.

"The Lady Phroso will come on board about ten, and we are going for a little run," I said. "Just look after some lunch."

"Everything will be ready for your lordship and her ladyship," said Watkins. Hitherto he had been rather doubtful about Phroso's claim to nobility, but the news of last night planted her firmly in the status of "ladyship." "Has your lordship heard," he continued, "that the launch is to carry the governor's body to Constantinople? There she is by the gunboat."

"Ah, yes, I see. They seem to be giving the gunboat a rub down, Watkins."

"Not before it was necessary, my lord. A dirtier deck I never saw."

The gunboat was evidently enjoying a thorough cleaning; the sailors, half-naked, were scouring her decks, and some of the soldiers were assisting lazily.

"The officers have landed to explore the island, my lord. When Mouraki was alive, they were not allowed to land at all."

"Mouraki's death makes a good many differences, eh, Watkins?"

"That it does, my lord," rejoined Watkins, with a decorous smile.

I left him, and having landed, strolled

up to the house. The yacht was to have her steam up ready to start by the time that I returned. I strolled leisurely through the street, such of the islanders as I met saluting me in a most friendly fashion. Times were certainly changed for me in Neopalía, and I chided myself for the ingratitude expressed in my sigh. Neopalía in its new placidity was very pleasant.

Very pleasant, also, was Phroso, as she came to meet me from the house, radiant and shy. We wasted no time there, but at once returned to the harbor, for the dancing water tempted us. Thus we found ourselves on board an hour before the appointed time, and I took Phroso down below to show her the cabin, in which, under the escort of Kortés's sister, she was to make the voyage. Denny looked in on us for a moment, announced that the fires were getting up and that we could start in half an hour. Hogvardt appeared with his account of expenditure—and disappeared far more quickly. Meanwhile we talked as lovers will—and ought—about things that do not need record; for not being worth remembering, they are ever remembered, as is the way of this perverse world.

Presently, however, Denny hailed me, telling me that the captain desired to see me. I told Phroso to stay where she was—I should be back in a moment—and went on deck. The captain was there, and he began to draw me aside. Perceiving that he had something to say, I proposed to him that we should go to the little smoking-room forward. He acquiesced, and as soon as we were seated, and Watkins had brought coffee and cigarettes, he turned to me with an aspect of sincere gratification, as he said:

"My dear Lord Wheatley, I am rejoiced to tell you that I was quite right as to the view likely to be taken of your position. I have received by the launch instructions telegraphed to Rhodes, and they enable me to set you free at once. In point of fact, there is no disposition in official quarters to make any trouble concerning your share in recent events. You are, therefore, at liberty to suit your own convenience entirely, and I need not detain you an hour."

"My dear captain, I am infinitely obliged to you. I am much indebted for your good offices."

"Indeed, no. I merely reported what had occurred. Shall you leave to-day?"

"Oh, no, not for a day or two. To-day, you see, I'm going for a little pleasure ex-

pedition. I wish you'd join us." For I felt in a most friendly mood towards him.

"Indeed, I wish I could," said he, with equal friendliness. "But I am obliged to go up to the house at once."

"To the house. What for?"

"To communicate to the Lady Euphrosyne my intentions concerning her."

I was about to put a cigarette to my lips, but I stopped, suspending it in mid air.

"I beg your pardon," said I, "but have you instructions concerning her?"

He smiled and laid a hand on my arm with an apologetic air.

"I do not think that there is any cause for serious uneasiness," said he; "though the delay will, I fear, be somewhat irksome to you. I must say, also, that it is impossible—yes, I admit that it is impossible—altogether to ignore the serious disturbances which have occurred. And these Neopallians are old offenders. Still, I am confident that the lady will be most leniently treated, especially in view of the relation in which she now stands to you."

"What are your instructions?" I asked shortly.

"I am instructed to bring her with me, as soon as I have made provisional arrangements for the order of the island, and to carry her to Smyrna, where I am ordered to sail. From there she will be sent home, to await the result of an inquiry. But pray do not be uneasy. I have no doubt at all that she will be acquitted of blame, or at least escape with a reprimand or a nominal penalty. The delay is really the only annoying matter. Annoying to you, I mean, Lord Wheatley."

"The delay? Is it likely to be serious?"

"Well," admitted the captain with a candid air, "we do not move hastily in these matters; no, our procedure is not rapid. Still, I should say that a year, or, well, perhaps eighteen months, would see an end to it. Oh, yes, I really think so."

"Eighteen months?" I cried aghast. "But she'll be my wife long before that; in eighteen days, I hope."

"Oh, no, no, my dear lord," said he, shaking his head soothingly. "She will certainly not be allowed to marry you until these matters are settled. But do not be vexed. You are young. You can afford to wait. What, after all, is a year or eighteen months at your time of life?"

"It's a great deal worse," said I, "than at any other time of life." But he merely laughed, and gulped down the remainder

of his coffee. Then he went on, in his quiet, placid way:

"So I'm afraid I can't join your little excursion. I must go up to the house at once, and acquaint the lady with my instructions. She may have some preparations to make, and I must take her with me the day after to-morrow. As you see, my ship is undergoing some trifling repairs and cleaning, and I can't be ready to start before then."

I sat silent for a moment or two, smoking my cigarette, and I looked at the placid captain out of the corner of my eye.

"I really hope you are not much annoyed, my dear Lord Wheatley," said he, after a moment or two.

"Oh, it's vexatious, of course," I returned carelessly, "but I suppose there's no help for it. But, captain, I don't see why you shouldn't join us to-day. We shall be back in the afternoon, and it will be plenty of time then to inform the Lady Phroso. She's not a fashionable woman who wants forty-eight hours to pack her gowns."

"It is certainly a lovely morning for a little cruise," said the captain longingly.

"And I want to point out to you the exact spot where Demetri killed the pasha."

"That would certainly be very interesting."

"Then you'll come?"

"You are certain to be back in time for—"

"Oh, you'll have plenty of time to talk to Phroso. I'll see to that. You can send a message to her now, if you like."

"I don't think that's necessary. If I see her this afternoon—"

"I promise you that you shall."

"But aren't you going to see her to-day? I thought you would spend the day with her."

"I shall hope to see her also; you won't monopolize her, you know. Just now I'm for a cruise."

"You're a philosophical lover," he laughed, and I laughed also, shrugging my shoulders.

"Then, if you'll excuse me—no, don't move, don't move—I'll give orders for our start, and come back for another cigarette with you."

"You are most obliging," said he, and sank back on the seat that ran round the little saloon.

At what particular point in the conversation which I have recorded my resolution was definitely taken I cannot say; but it

was complete and full-blown before the captain accepted my invitation. The certainty of a separation of such monstrous length from Phroso, and the chance of her receiving harsh treatment, were more than I could consent to contemplate. I must play for my own hand. The island meant to be true to its nature to the last, and my departure from it was to be an escape, not a decorous leave-taking. I was almost glad; yet I hoped that I should not get my good friend the captain into serious trouble. Well, better the captain than Phroso, anyhow; and I laughed to myself when I thought of how I should redeem my promise, and give him plenty of time to talk to Phroso.

I ran rapidly up to the deck; Denny and Hogvardt were there.

"How soon can you have full steam up?" I asked in an urgent, cautious whisper.

"In ten minutes now," said Hogvardt, suddenly recognizing my eagerness.

"Why, what's up, man?" asked Denny.

"They're going to send Phroso to Constantinople to be tried; anyhow, they'd keep her there a year or more. I don't mean to stand it."

"Why, what will you do?"

"Do? Go. The captain's on board; the gunboat can't overtake us. Besides, they won't suspect anything on board of her. Denny, run and tell Phroso not to show herself till I bid her. The captain thinks she's up at the house. We'll start as soon as you're ready, Hog."

"But, my lord—"

"Charley, old man—"

"I tell you I won't stand it. Are you game or aren't you?"

Denny paused for a moment, poising himself on his heels.

"What a lark," he then exclaimed.

"All right. I'll put Phroso up to it," and he disappeared in the direction of her cabin.

I stood for a moment looking at the gunboat, where the busy operations went on undisturbed, and at the harbor and street beyond. I shook my head reprovingly at Neopalía; the little island was always leading me into indiscretions. Then I turned and made my way back to where my unsuspecting victim was peacefully consuming cigarettes. Mouraki Pasha would not have been caught like this! Heaven be thanked! I was not dealing with Mouraki Pasha.

"Demetri had some good in him, after all," I thought, as I sat down by the cap-

tain and told him that we should be under way in five minutes. He exhibited much satisfaction at the prospect.

The five minutes passed. Hogvardt, who acted as our skipper, gave his orders. We began to move. The captain and I came up from below and stood on deck. He looked seaward, anticipating his excursion; I landward, reviewing mine. A few boys waved their hands, a woman or two their handkerchiefs; the little harbor began to recede; the old gray house on the hill faced me in its renewed tranquillity.

"Well, good-by to Neopalía!" I had said with a sigh before I knew it.

"I beg your pardon, Lord Wheatley?" said the captain, wheeling round.

"For a few hours," I added, and I went forward and began to talk with Hogvardt; I had some things to arrange with him. Presently Watkins appeared, announcing luncheon. I rejoined the captain.

"I thought," said I, "that we'd have a run straight out first and look at Mouraki's death-place on our way home."

"I am entirely in your hands," said he most courteously, and with more truth than he was aware of.

Denny, he, and I went down to our meal. I plied the captain with the best of our cheer. In the safe seclusion of the yacht, champagne cup, mixed as Watkins alone could mix it, overcame his religious scruples; the breach once made grew wider, and the captain grew merry. With his coffee came placidity, and on placidity followed torpor. Meanwhile the yacht bowled merrily along.

"It is nearly two o'clock," said I.

"We ought to be turning. I say, captain, wouldn't you like a nap? I'll wake you long before we get to Neopalía."

Denny indiscreetly smiled at this form of promise, and I covertly nudged him into gravity.

The captain received my proposal with apologetic gratitude. We left him curled up on the seat, and went on deck. Hogvardt was at the wheel, and a broad smile spread over his face.

"At this rate, my lord," said he, "we shall make Cyprus early to-morrow."

"Good," said I; and I did two things. I called Phroso, and I loaded my revolver; a show of overwhelming force is, as we often hear, the surest guarantee of peace.

Denny now took a turn at the wheel, old Hogvardt went to eat his dinner; Phroso appeared, and she and I sat down in the stern watching where Neopalía lay, now a

little spot on the horizon. Then I myself told Phroso in my own way why I had so sorely neglected her all the morning, for Denny's explanation had been summary and confused. She was fully entitled to my excuses, and had come on deck in a state of delightful resentment, too soon, alas, banished by surprise and apprehension.

An hour or two thus passed very pleasantly, for the terror of Constantinople soon reconciled Phroso to every risk; her only fear was that she would never again be allowed to land in Neopalía. For this also I tried to console her, and was, I am proud to say, succeeding very tolerably when I looked up at the sound of footsteps. They came evenly towards us, then they suddenly stopped dead. I felt for my revolver, and I observed Denny carelessly strolling up, having been relieved again by Hogvardt. The captain stood motionless, three yards from where Phroso and I sat together. I rose with an easy smile.

"I hope you have enjoyed your nap, Captain," said I, and at the same moment I covered him with my barrel.

He was astounded, and indeed well he might be. He stared helplessly at Phroso and at me. Denny was at his elbow now, and took his arm in tolerant good humor.

"You see we've played a little game on you," said Denny. "We couldn't let the lady go to Constantinople. It isn't at all a fit place for her, you know."

I stepped up to the amazed man and told him briefly what had occurred.

"Now, captain," I went on, "resistance is quite useless. We're running for Cyprus, and shall be there to-morrow. It belongs to you, I believe, in a sense—I'm not a student of foreign affairs—but I think we shall very likely find an English ship there. Now, if you'll give me your word to hold your tongue when we are at Cyprus, you may lodge as many complaints as you like directly we leave; indeed, I think you'd be wise, in your own interests, to make a protest. Meanwhile we can enjoy the cruise in good fellowship."

"And if I refuse?" he asked.

"If you refuse," said I, "I shall be compelled to get rid of you—oh, don't misunderstand me. I shall not imitate your governor. But it's a fine day; we have an excellent gig; and I can spare you two hands to row you back to Neopalía, or wherever else you may choose to go."

"You would leave me in the gig?"

"With the deepest regret," said I, bow-

ing. "But I am obliged to put this lady's safety above the pleasure of your society."

The unfortunate man had no alternative, and, true to the creed of his nation, he accepted the inevitable. Taking the cigarette from between his lips, he remarked, "I give my promise, but nothing more," bowed to Phroso, and, going up to her, said very prettily, "Madame, I congratulate you on a resolute lover."

Now hardly had this happened when our lookout man called twice, in quick succession, "Ship ahead!" At once we all ran forward, and I snatched Denny's binocular from him. There were two vessels visible, one approaching on the starboard bow, the other right ahead. They appeared to be about equally distant. I scanned them eagerly through the glass, the others standing round and waiting my report. Nearer they came and nearer.

"They're both ships of war," said I, without taking the glass from my eyes. "I shall be able to see the flags in a minute."

A hush of excited suspense witnessed to the interest of my news. I found even the impassive captain close by my elbow, as though he were trying to get one eye on to the lens of the glass.

My next remark did nothing to lessen the excitement.

"The Turkish flag, by Jove!" I cried; and quick as thought followed from the captain:

"My promise did not cover that, Lord Wheatley."

"Shall we turn and run for it?" asked Denny in a whisper.

"They'd think that queer," cautioned Hogvardt, "and if she came after us we shouldn't have a chance."

"The English flag, by Jupiter!" I cried a second later, and I took the glass from my strained eyes. The captain caught eagerly at it and looked; then he also dropped it and said:

"Yes, Turkish and English; both will come within hail of us."

"It's a race, by heaven," cried Denny.

The two vessels were now approaching us almost on the same course, for each had altered half a point, and both were about half a point on our starboard bow. They would be very close to one another by the time they came up with us; it would be almost impossible for us, by any alteration of our course, to reach one before the other.

"Yes, it's a race," said I, and I felt

Phroso's arm passed through mine. She knew the meaning of the race. Possession is nine points of the law, and in a case so doubtful as hers, it was very unlikely that the ship which got possession of her would surrender her to the other. Which ship was it to be?

"Are we going to cause an international complication?" asked Denny in a longing tone.

"We shall very likely run into a nautical one if we don't look out," said I.

However, the two approaching vessels seemed to become aware of this danger, for they diverged from one another so that, if we kept a straight course, we should now pass them by, one on the port side and one on the starboard. But we should pass within a couple of hundred yards of both, and that was well in earshot on such a day. I looked at the captain, and the captain looked at me.

"Shall we take him below and smother him?" whispered Denny.

I did not feel at liberty to adopt the suggestion, much to my regret. The agreement I had made with the captain precluded any assault on his liberty. I had omitted to provide for the case which had occurred. Well, that was my fault, and I must stand the consequences of it—my word was pledged to him that he should be treated "in all friendliness" on one condition, and that he had satisfied. Now, to act as Denny suggested would not be to treat him in all friendliness. I shook my head sadly. Hogvardt shouted for orders from the wheel.

"What am I to do, my lord?" he cried. "Full speed ahead?"

I looked at the captain. I knew he would not pass the Turkish ship without trying to attract her attention. We were within a quarter of a mile of the vessels now.

"Stop," I called, and I added quickly, "Lower away the gig, Denny."

Denny caught my purpose in a moment; he called a hand, and they set to work. The pace of the yacht began to slacken. I glanced at the two ships; men with glasses were peering at us from either deck, wondering no doubt what our manoeuvre meant. But the captain knew as well as Denny what it meant, and he leapt forward suddenly and hailed the Turk in his native tongue. What he said I don't know, but it caused a great pother on deck, and they ran up some signal or other. I never remember the code, and the book was not about me.

But now the gig was down and the yacht motionless. Looking again, I perceived that both the ships had shut off steam, and were reversing to arrest their course the sooner. I seized Phroso by the arm. Then the captain turned for a moment, as though to interrupt our passage.

"It's as much as your life is worth," said I; and he gave way. Then, to my amazement, he ran to the side and, just as he was, leapt overboard and struck out towards the Turk. One instant later I saw why; they were lowering a boat. Alas, our ship was not so eager! The captain must have shouted something very significant.

"Signal for a boat, Hog," I cried, "and then come along. Hi, Watkins, come on! Are you ready, Denny?" And I fairly lifted Phroso in my arms, and ran with her to the side. She was breathing quickly, and a little laugh gurgled from her lips as Denny received her from my arms into his in the gig.

But we were not safe yet. The Turk had got a start, and his boat was springing merrily over the waves towards us. The captain swam powerfully and gallantly, and his fez-covered head bobbed gayly up and down. Ah, now our people were moving! And when they began to move they wasted no time. We wasted no time either, but bent to our oars. For the second time since I reached Neopalia I had a thorough good bucketing. But for the Turk's start we should have managed it easily, as we rowed towards the English boat, and the divergence which the vessels made in their course prevented the two from approaching us side by side; but the start was enough to make matters very equal. Now the boat and the captain met. He was in in a second, with wonderful agility. Picking him up hardly lost them a stroke. They were coming straight at us, the captain standing in the stern, urging them on. But now I saw that the middy in the English boat had caught the idea that there was some fun afoot, for he stood up also, and urged on his crew. The two great ships lay motionless on the water, and gave us all their attention.

"Pull, boys, pull!" I cried. "It's all right, Phroso; we shall do it!"

Should we? And, if we did not, would the English captain fight for my Phroso? I would have sunk the Turk with a laugh for her. But I was afraid that he would not be so obliging as to do it for me.

"The Turk gains," said Hogvardt, who was our coxswain.

"Hang him! Put your backs into it."

On went the three boats, and the two pursuers were now converging close on us.

"We shall do it by a few yards," said Hogvardt.

"Thank God!" I muttered.

"No; we shall be beaten by a few yards," he said, a moment later. "They pull well, those fellows."

But we too pulled well then, though I have no right to say it. And the good little middy and his men did their duty—oh, what a tip these blue jackets should have if they did the trick!—and the noses of all the boats seemed to be tending to one spot on the bright, dancing sea. To one spot indeed they were tending. The Turks were no more than twenty yards off, the English perhaps thirty. The captain gave one last cry of exhortation; the middy responded with a hearty English oath. We strained and tugged for dear life. They were on us now—the Turks a little first. Now they were ten yards off, now five, and the English yet ten!

But for a last stroke we pulled; and then I dropped my oars and sprang to my feet. The nose of the captain's boat was within a yard, and they were backing water so as not to run into us. The middy had given a like order. For a single instant matters seemed to stand still, and we to be poised between defeat and victory. Then, even as the captain's hand was on our gunwale, I bent and caught Phroso up in the arms that she sprang to meet, and I fairly flung her across the narrow strait of water that parted us from the English boat. Six strong and eager arms received her, and a cheer rang out from the English ship; for they saw now that it had been a race, and a race for a lady. And I, seeing her safe, turned to the captain, and said:

"Fetch her back from there, if you can, and good luck to you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ISLAND IN A CALM.

WE did not fight. My friend the captain proposed to rely on his British *confrère's* sense of justice and of the courtesy which should obtain between two great and friendly nations. To this end he accompanied us on board the ship and laid his case before Captain Beverley, R.N. My argument, which I stated with brevity but not without vehemence, was threefold: first, that Phroso had committed no

offence; secondly, that if she had it was a political offence; thirdly, was Captain Beverley going to hand over to a crew of dirty Turks the prettiest girl in the Mediterranean? This last point made a decided impression on the officers who were assisting their commander's deliberations, but it won no more from him than a tolerant smile and a glance through his *pince-nez* at Phroso, who sat at the table opposite to him, awaiting the award of justice. After I had, in the heat of discussion, called the Turks "dirty," I had moved round to our friend the captain, apologized humbly, and congratulated him on his gallant and spirited behavior. He received my advances with courtesy, but firmly restated his claim to Phroso. Captain Beverley appeared a little puzzled.

"And, to add to it all," he observed to me, "I thought you were dead." For I had told him my name.

"Not at all," said I resentfully. "I am quite alive, and I'm going to marry this lady."

"You intend to marry her, Lord Wheatley?"

"She has done me the honor to consent and I certainly intend it—unless you're going to send her off to Constantinople or heaven knows where."

Beverley arched his brows, but it was not his business to express an opinion, and I heartily forgave him his hinted disapproval when he said to the captain:

"I really don't see how I can do what you ask. If you had won the tr—I mean, if you had succeeded in taking the lady on board, I should have had no more to say. As it is, I don't think I can do anything but carry her to a British port. You can prefer your claim to extradition before the court there if you are so advised."

"Bravo!" cried Denny.

"Be good enough to hold your tongue, sir," said Captain Beverley.

"At least you will take a note of my demand," urged the Turk.

"With the utmost pleasure," responded Beverley, and then and there he took a note. People seem often to find some mystical comfort in having a note taken, though no other consequence appears likely to ensue. Then the captain, being comforted by his note, took his farewell. I walked with him to the side of the vessel.

"I hope you bear no malice," said I as I held out my hand, "and that this affair won't get you into any trouble."

"Oh, I don't think so," said he. "Your ingenuity will be my excuse."

"You're very good. I hope you will come and see us in Neopalía some day."

"You expect to return to Neopalía?"

"Certainly. It's mine—or Phroso's—I don't know which."

"There's such a thing as forfeiture in our law," he observed, and with this Parthian shot he walked down and got into his boat. But I was not much frightened.

So, the Turk being thus disposed of, Denny and Hogvardt went back to the yacht, while Phroso, Watkins, and I took up our abode on the ship. And when our captain had heard the whole story of our adventures in Neopalía he was so overcome by Phroso's gallant conduct that he walked up and down his own deck with her all the evening, while I, making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, pretended to look very pleased and recited my dealings with Mouraki to an attentive group of officers. Clothes were produced from somewhere for Phroso—our navy is ready for everything—and thus in the fullness of time we came to Malta. Here the captain had a wife; and she was as delighted as, I take leave to say, all good women ought to be at the happy ending of our story; and at Malta we waited. But nothing happened. No claim was made for Phroso's extradition; and I may as well state here that no claim ever was made. But when we came to London, on board a P. and O. steamer in charge of a benevolent but strict chaperon, I lost no time in calling on the Turkish ambassador, for I desired to put matters on a satisfactory footing at once. He received me with much courtesy, but expressed the opinion that Phroso and I alike had forfeited any claim which she or I, or either, or both of us, might have possessed to the island of Neopalía. I was very much annoyed at this attitude, and I rose and stood with my back to the fire.

"Is it the death of Mouraki Pasha that has so incensed your government?" I ventured to ask.

"He was a very distinguished man," observed the ambassador.

"Practically banished to a very undistinguished office—for his position," I remarked.

"One would not call it banishment," murmured his Excellency.

"One would," I acquiesced, smiling, "of course be particularly careful not to call it banishment."

Something like a smile greeted this speech, but the ambassador shrugged his shoulders.

"Consider," said he, "the scenes of disorder and bloodshed."

"When I consider," I rejoined, "the scenes of disorder and bloodshed which passed before my eyes, when I consider the anarchy, the murder, the terrible dangers to which I, who went to Neopalía under the sanction and protection of your flag, was exposed, I perceive that the whole affair is nothing less than a European scandal."

The ambassador shifted in his arm-chair.

"I shall, of course," said I, "prefer a claim to compensation."

"To compensation?"

"Certainly. My island has been taken from me, and I have lost my money. Moreover, your governor tried to kill me."

"So did your wife," remarked the pasha. "At least the lady who, as I understand, is to be your wife."

"I can forgive my wife. I do not propose to forgive your government."

The ambassador stroked his beard.

"If official representations were made through the proper quarters—" he began.

"Oh, come," I interrupted, "I want to spend my honeymoon there; and I'm going to be married in a fortnight."

"The young lady is the difficulty. The manner in which you left Neopalía—"

"Is not generally known," said I.

The ambassador looked up.

"The tribute," I observed, "is due a month hence. I don't know who'll pay it you."

"It is but a trifling sum," said he contemptuously.

"It is indeed small for such a delightful island."

The ambassador eyed me questioningly. I advanced toward him.

"Considering," said I, "that I have only paid half the purchase money, and that the other half is due to nobody—or to my own wife—I should not resent a proposal to double the tribute."

The ambassador reflected.

"I will forward your proposal to the proper quarter," he said at last.

I smiled, and I said:

"Will that take more than a fortnight?"

"I venture to hope not."

"And, of course, pardon and all that sort of thing will be included?"

"I will appeal to his Majesty's clemency," promised the pasha.

I had no objection to his calling it by that name, and I took my leave, very

much pleased with the result of the interview. But, as luck would have it, while I was pursuing my way across Hyde Park—for Phroso was staying with a friend of Mrs. Beverley's in Kensington—I ran plump into the arms of Mrs. Kennett Hipgrave.

She stopped me with decision; for I confess that I tried to pass by her.

"My dear Lord Wheatley," she cried, with unbounded cordiality, "how charming to meet you again! Your reported death really caused quite a gloom."

"You are too good," I murmured. "Ah—er, I hope Miss Beatrice is well?"

Mrs. Kennett Hipgrave's face grew grave and sympathetic.

"My poor child," she sighed. "She was terribly upset by the news, Lord Wheatley. Of course, it seemed to her peculiarly sad; for you had received my letter only a week before."

"That must have seemed to aggravate the pathos very much," I agreed.

"Not that, of course, it altered the real wisdom of the step I advised her to take."

"Not in the least, really, of course," said I.

"I do hope you agree with me now, Lord Wheatley?"

"Yes, I think I have come to see that you were right, Mrs. Hipgrave."

"Oh, that makes me so happy! And it will make my poor dear child so happy too. I assure you she has fretted very much over it."

"I am sorry to hear that," said I politely. "Is she in town?"

"Why, no, not just now."

"Where is she? I should like to write her a line."

"Oh, she's staying with friends."

"Could you oblige me with the address?"

"Well, the fact is, Lord Wheatley, Beatrice is staying with—with a Mrs. Hamlyn."

"Oh, a Mrs. Hamlyn? Any relation, Mrs. Hipgrave?"

"Well, yes. In fact, an aunt of our common friend."

"Ah, an aunt of our common friend," and I smiled. Mrs. Hipgrave struggled nobly, but in the end she smiled also; and, after a little pause, I observed:

"I am going to be married myself, Mrs. Hipgrave."

Mrs. Hipgrave grew rather grave again, and she observed:

"I heard something about a—a lady, Lord Wheatley."

"If you had heard it all you'd have heard a great deal about her."

A certain appearance of embarrassment spread over Mrs. Hipgrave's face.

"We are old friends, Lord Wheatley," she said at last, and I bowed in grateful recognition. "I'm sure you won't mind if I speak plainly to you. Now, is she the sort of person whom you would be really wise to marry? Remember your wife will be Lady Wheatley."

"I had not forgotten that would happen," I said.

"I am told," pursued Mrs. Hipgrave, in a somewhat scornful tone, "that she is very pretty."

"But then that is not really of importance, is it?" I murmured.

Mrs. Hipgrave looked at me with just a touch of suspicion; but she went on bravely:

"And one or two very curious things have been said."

"Not to me," I observed with infinite amiability.

"Her family, now—"

"Her family was certainly a drawback; but there are no more of them, Mrs. Hipgrave."

"Then somebody told me that she was in the habit of wearing—"

"Dear me, Mrs. Hipgrave, in these days everybody does that—more or less, you know."

Mrs. Hipgrave sighed pathetically, and added with a slight shudder:

"They say she carried a dagger."

"They will say anything," I reminded her.

"At any rate," said Mrs. Hipgrave, "she will be quite unused to the ways of society."

"Oh, we shall teach her, we shall teach her," said I cheerfully. "After all, it's only a difference of method. When people in Neopalía are annoyed, they put a knife into you—"

"Good gracious, Lord Wheatley!"

"Here," I pursued, "they congratulate you; but it's the same principle. Won't you wish me joy, Mrs. Hipgrave?"

"If you are really bent upon it, I suppose I must."

"And you'll tell the dear children?" I asked anxiously.

"The dear children?" she echoed; and she certainly suspected me by now.

"Why, yes. Your daughter and Bennett Hamlyn, you know."

Mrs. Hipgrave surveyed me from top to toe; her aspect was very severe. And

then she delivered herself of the following remark:

"I can never be sufficiently thankful," she said, with eyes upturned towards the sky, "that my poor dear girl found out her mistake in time."

"I have the utmost regard for Miss Beatrice," I rejoined, "but I will not differ from you, Mrs. Hipgrave."

I must shift the scene again back to the island that I loved. For his Majesty's clemency justified the ambassador's belief in it, and Neopalía was restored to Phroso and me. Thither we went in the spring of the next year, leaving Denny inconsolable behind, but accompanied by old Hogvardt and by Watkins. This time we went straight out by sea from England, and the new crew of my yacht was more trustworthy than when Spiro and Demetri (ah, I had nearly written "poor Demetri"—when the fellow was a murderer!) were sent by the cunning of Constantine Stefanopoulos to compose it. We landed this time to meet no threatening looks; and the death-chant that One-Eyed Alexander wrote was not raised when we entered the old gray house on the hill, looking over the blue waters. Ulysses is fabled by the poet to have—well, to put it plainly—to have grown bored with peaceful Ithaca. I do not know whether I shall prove a Ulysses in that and live to regret the new-born tranquillity of Neopalía.

In candor, the early stormy days have a great attraction, and I love to look back to them in memory; and so strong was this feeling upon me that it led me to refuse a request of my wife's—the only one of hers which I have yet met in that fashion. For when we had been two or three days in the island—I spent one, by the way, in visiting the graves of my dead friends and enemies, a most suggestive and soothing occupation—I saw, as I walked with her through the hall of our house, masons' tools and mortar lying near where the staircase led up and hard by the secret door. And Phroso said to me:

"I'm sure you'd like to have that horrible secret passage blocked up, Charley. Why, it's full of terrible memories."

"My dear Phroso, wall up the passage?"

"We shan't want it now," said she with a laugh—and something else.

"It is true," I admitted, "that I intend, so far as possible, to rule by constitutional means in Neopalía. Still, one never knows. My dearest, have you no romance?"

"No," said Phroso shamelessly. "I've had enough of romance. I want to live quietly; and I don't want to push anyone over into that awful pool where poor Kortés fell."

I stood looking at the boards under the staircase; and presently I knelt down and touched the spring. The boards rolled away, the passage gaped before us, and I put my arm round Phroso, as I said:

"Now, heaven forbid that I should lay a modern sacrilegious hand upon the secret of the Stefanopouloi! For the world makes many circles, Phroso, forward sometimes, sometimes back; and it is something to know that here in Neopalía we are ready; and that if any man attacks our sovereignty, why, let him look out for the secret of the Stefanopouloi! In certain moods, Phroso, I should be capable of coming back from the chasm—alone!"

So Phroso, on my entreaty, spared the passage; and even now, when the shades of middle age (a plague on 'em) are deepening, and the wild doings of the purchaser of Neopalía grow golden in distant memory, I like still to walk to the edge of the chasm, and recall all that it has seen—the contests, the dark tricks, the sudden deaths—aye, to travel back from the fearful struggle of Kortés and Constantine on the flying bridge to that long ago time when the Baron d'Ezonville was so lucky as to be set adrift in his shirt, while Stefan Stefanopoulos's headless trunk was dashed into the dim water, and One-Eyed Alexander, the bard, wrote the chant of death. Ah me! that was two hundred years ago!

THE END.



RECOLLECTIONS OF A LITERARY LIFE.

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS,

Author of "The Gates Ajar," "A Singular Life," &c.

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL.—A BATTLE WITH INSOMNIA.—THE "OLD MAID'S PARADISE" CLOSED FOREVER.—THE HISTORY OF TWO COLLABORATED NOVELS.



INSTINCTLY, in fact almost entirely, with Gloucester I find interwoven my recollections of the poet Edward Rowland Sill—a man of exquisite performance and of superior promise in American letters; still a young man—too soon overtaken by death.

He happened on Eastern Point one summer, or opening autumn, like a bird on the wing, from some foreign land. In truth, there was always, to my fancy, something birdlike about him.

He had that shy eye, that essential reticence united with apparent frankness, that air of a form of creation finer than ours and competent to be critical of us accordingly; yet, from very fineness, pathetically dependent upon our sympathy. He had, at the time I knew him, printed but one thin book, I think—a booklet, he called it. It has, since his death, been republished. The best thing he ever wrote was "The Fool's Prayer." Or perhaps I should hesitate between that and his beautiful poem written for Smith College—that containing the well-known lines:

"Were women wise, and men all true—
And one thing more that may not be,
Old earth were fair enough for me."

He and Mrs. Sill occupied a cottage near me for a few weeks, and it was my good fortune to know something of them in the freedom from constraint which belongs to summer seashore neighborhoods—especially, I sometimes think, to the Gloucester neighborhood.

I had known the poet for some time by correspondence only; he was a wonderful letter-writer. Real literary correspondence—in fact, correspondence of any kind—is a lost art in our scurrying day; and I found his letters pungently stimulating in

one long, secluded Andover winter. I only understood how valuable they were when they ceased forever. A certain quaintness in the man used to show itself in the shapes and styles of his letters. I remember receiving quite a number written upon long, narrow coils of white paper; I never decided whether they were the tapes such as the telegrams of an older time used to be inscribed upon and such as stock-brokers still use, or whether they were the foldings from his wife's ribbons. This is the only instance in which I ever received letters by the yard.

I had never seen him, as I say, and I well remember his shy appearance at my cottage. He seemed to shrink unaccountably from the first meeting. "We have an ideal of a person from writing," he said. Whether he feared to lose his of me, or mine of him, he did not divulge; and I did not dare to ask. He was, in most respects, one of the most finely strung human beings whom I have ever known. How easily most of us brush off our ideals! His were the realities of life to him.

He and Mrs. Sill were enthusiastic walkers, and gave much of their time to wandering over the Gloucester downs. I could not join in this pleasure, and my talks with him were fragmentary, but always rich and nutritive. He seldom chatted; he conversed. A talkative feminine fellow-boarder he named, I remember, "The Jabberwock."

Mr. Sill was charmed with Gloucester. He had the Wonson Cottage, with the beautiful lava gorge in front, where the tide rises almost to the piazza, and his favorite way of spending an evening was to go out and sit on the rocks in the dark and swing his feet off. He liked to hang them over the water, he said.

The same moral refinement which marks his poems characterized the man. His personal unselfishness was of a very high