

# A Daughter of the States.\*

BY MAX PEMBERTON.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

JESSIE GOLDING, the daughter of a wealthy American, is a passenger on the *Winona*, chaperoned by her aunt, and bound for England, where she is to marry Lord Eastray, when she meets Murray West, who interests her, despite the fact that his somewhat unprepossessing appearance has made him known to the other passengers as the *Rogue*. In conversation with her, West cheerfully owns up to being a man "with a past," and then angers the girl by characterizing her approaching marriage as the selling of her birth-right for a castle and three generations of blackguardism. But later there is an accident on board the steamer, and West is instrumental in saving a number of lives; whereupon he is restored to favor. Jessie tells Murray of her grief at the death of her brother, who was shot during a fracas at Jackson City, and she bitterly denounces his slayer. Murray acknowledges having witnessed the shooting of Lionel Golding, and tells the girl that he was not murdered, but refuses to give her any further details of the affair. This causes another rupture in their friendly intercourse, but it is resumed later when they are thrown together during the confusion resulting from another bad accident which happens to the steamer. She has broken her propeller shaft, and while she is helplessly adrift on the ocean a fog arises, during which another vessel runs into her and sinks her. Murray and Jessie escape on a small life-raft, and are espied some hours later by the lookout on the *Royal Scot*, a tramp steamer, and picked up. But their condition is not much improved, for the captain of the *Scot*, Tod Keen, is a low ruffian, and the crew—with the exception of the mate, Fenton, and one or two others—are no better. It is not long before Murray incurs the enmity of Captain Keen, and the latter tries to murder him. But West is watching, and the scene culminates in a furious attack made on Murray and Fenton by the captain, backed up by the crew, with the result that Keen is accidentally slain by one of his own men, and the crew temporarily subdued. Murray and his friends take refuge in the chart-room, and that night Jessie insists on standing guard for a time, while her defenders rest. While doing so, she has a talk with the second mate, Kelly, and when he learns that she is an American girl he announces that he is on her side through thick and thin.

## XIV (Continued).

THE second officer went chattering on, pleased enough to find a pretty girl at his side, and asking himself what would happen to her if the men got the upper hand. Kelly had led a wild life; but something of an American's reverence for women remained to him; and although Jessie knew it not, her chance talk with him that night was to mean much in the hours before them. Kelly followed her like a dog; and when the watch was changed, and he turned in, he thought of her still.

We say that the watch was changed; and this, surely, was the strangest event of a night of events—that at eight bells, when Kelly summoned the watch from below, the men lurched up and took their stations as if nothing had happened. True, there were still dark patches upon the deck to mark the scene of the fracas; but the bodies of the dead were in the sea behind them, and all the stillness of the night, the cloudless sky, the cold waning moon, seemed to say: "Impossible, impossible that these things could have been!"

When the dawn came, the picture lost none of its weird delusions. Not a man

aboard the *Royal Scot* discussed the tragedy in any word above a whisper, and while Fenton paced the bridge as impassive as ever, and the dour Scotch engineer smoked a pipe by the engine-room skylight, the crew stood sullen and watchful, as those who knew that a reckoning must come but did not believe it would be yet.

Murray rarely closed his eyes that night. The sun had not been an hour above the eastern horizon when he started up from a fitful doze and discovered Jessie in the armchair by his bunk. Her pretense that she was sleeping was as pretty as it was disingenuous. As soon as Murray sat up, she opened her great eyes, and tried to look as little guilty as might be. He, on his part, was weary and ill-prepared for activities; but his mental perceptions were clearer for the sunshine, and his anxiety for their future would not let him rest.

"Come," he said, "this is absolute nonsense; what is Fenton doing, to let you be here?"

"Mr. Fenton, I believe, is on the bridge. Shall I call him down to send me away?"

Murray sank back upon his pillow, and regarded her with the tenderness which no manner of his could quite conceal.

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"How long have you been here, Jessie? When did you come down?"

"When the watch changed. They didn't seem to want me out there; at least, they weren't polite enough to say so. I hope you are better, Murray; I only waited to ask you that."

"Thank you, much better. My convalescence will be complete when I hear that you are in bed. It was very foolish of you, Jessie, but very kind. Don't think that I am insensible or unfeeling. I'm not that at all. I want to do the best for us all, and your best at present is bed."

"Let me dress your arm again and I will go, Murray."

"That's a bargain! I'll give you ten minutes, Jessie. Tell Fenton that I shall be with him directly. He's a good fellow, is Fenton, just the silent, honest seaman whose like you may find on any ship, whatever ruffians she carries. If there hadn't been a splendid Providence watching over you and me, we should have missed Fenton. But that's our luck, the luck which is going to take us right through to England, Jessie. Lord Eastry will have to put up a tablet to me at Monkton Castle. I deserve that, and you can design it—an ethereal figure with one foot on a ship's deck, and two angels for the corners. You'll see that I have my tablet, Jessie—you won't deny me that?"

Jessie's face clouded while he spoke, and she had no heart to respond to his jest. He saw plainly that he had wounded her, and he passed swiftly to the old topic.

"I must speak to Fenton about the men. If we can keep them quiet for a few hours, the thing's done. It was a dreadful scene, Jessie, and of course there will be an inquiry when we get ashore. We must try to shield the men as much as possible, and let that madman bear the brunt. I'm glad he didn't die by my hand. It's something to remember that one of his own killed him; but I want you to forget it all, if you can, and to leave the matter to Fenton and myself. We have both some wits to call our own, and we ought to be equal to it. I don't think you've anything really to fear, though I cannot keep it from you that there might be danger, if the worst comes to the worst—but I'm going to look for the best, and to say that I have been helped by the bravest little girl in America. You won't forbid me to say that, Jessie?"

"It would be quite untrue, Murray. I am not brave at all; bravery is something altogether different. I was frightened out of my life; but I hadn't time to tell you so.

It's been the same ever since we left the Winona. I don't think I shall ever quite realize that you and I lived through that night, and I don't know even now what happened yesterday. I seem changed into some one else, and I do believe the real Jessie Golding is still aboard the steamer, going to London to be married. I can't even ask myself if our friends are alive; I dare not do it. I want to wake up and tell myself that it isn't true, that I've dreamed it, that I am in my old cabin and am going up to the promenade deck to find my aunt and Mr. Trew and the others. Do you think they were saved, Murray?"

"I don't know, Jessie. I have hardly the right to speak of it. Many perished—we know that, we saw them for ourselves; but that isn't to say that many were not saved. I feel sure your aunt was in one of the boats. The men had a poor chance, and I am asking myself a dozen times a day if my friend Laidlaw did well or badly. Poor chap, he'll miss me badly! Do you know that Laidlaw is the weakest man I ever saw, and yet I love him? We know why we love a woman; something in her compels us; but in a man's case it is pure volition, often an aberration of the affections which is as incomprehensible as it is illogical. I would give a thousand pounds to hear that Laidlaw was alive."

Jessie did not think less well of him for this affection for his friend, though in her own heart she was asking herself if his estimate of the difficulties were true, and if love for woman was so easy of understanding as he would have it to be. Perhaps his great secret was not wholly hidden from her; but a certain pride forbade her to ask if that were so. Never once in the course of those perilous days had he spoken any word that a man might not address to the veriest stranger. If she knew the truth, it was because her womanly instinct understood, from this very self-control, the ardent passion with which it strove; the desire to leave her free and unfettered, the honorable truce which sealed his lips and would remain unbroken until she should be beyond the claims of his opportunities, the mistress of her own destiny and of his.

If such a code of honor pleased, it also piqued her vanity, and led her sometimes to say that she would provoke his declaration. Alone with him in this intimate comradeship, all would have been made so easy if Murray had but said: "I love you." But those were the words that remained unspoken; and there were hours when

Jessie believed that they would remain unspoken to the end.

Whether this silence would minister ultimately to her happiness, or leave her the fretting child of an elusive desire, she knew not in that dark hour of her destinies, nor cared to ask until the curtain of doubt should be lifted and she should see the day beyond.

### XV.

It has been remarked that sailors are much like sheep. They will go through any gap of folly which circumstance offers, without so much as asking why or where, or even caring whether the road leads to the abattoir. If no gap be available, they are equally content to chew the cud in the first sheltered place they come to, and to abandon a nomadic future in the face of a satisfying and abundant present.

So it befell on board the Royal Scot, where the hands gathered about the dinner-table in the fo'castle at one bell on the day following the tragedy, and discussed yesterday's events with as little concern as they would have devoted to a fat lady at a fair or the latest performance of a well-known pugilist. They had followed Captain Keen to the bridge last night because it was an obvious thing to do. They had quitted the bridge for a reason no less satisfactory. Now that facts were facts and the daylight sobered them, and Fenton, the silent, walked the bridge, they were just sheep again, browsing in a comfortable meadow and quite incapable of judgments either shrewd or helpful.

Three men took a leading part in this futile discussion. One of them was a German, to whom old Joe, the carpenter, Bath, the quartermaster, Watson, the boy, and a miscellaneous audience of Swedes, Teutons, and the riff-raff of docks, listened with baited breath. The point to be decided was an ominous one—no less than the question whether Fenton should be permitted to walk the bridge as he was doing, or should forthwith be knocked upon the head and sent to join their late lamented skipper. This question was quite too much for the crew of the Royal Scot.

"Vell," the German was saying, "he look at you so, mit his eye, and you run away like little shildren. Vat for? Is he so big, so large? I say dot he is not. You are all tamm cowards, and at Caracas you shall hang, every man upon a goot rope."

Old Joe shook his head and cut himself an enormous quid of tobacco, while he admitted the accusation.

"That's so," he agreed, "and a precious big fool I was to sign on at all! I ought to be past nigger ships at my time of life, and yet here I am with all the rest of you. Where shall I be to-morrow? I'd give a precious big chunk of 'bacca to know—indeed I would, though that ain't to say as it matters much, good rope or bad."

"Well," said Bath, the quartermaster, "you keep the 'bacca in your box and you'll be a wiser man. The fact is, mates, Captain Keen was a bad egg, and there's no use in saying he wasn't. I'm not one to cry on against a man taking a glass to drink—the Lord knows we all want it sometimes; but I do say this, when drink comes near knocking out a cook's brains with his own saucepan, it's time something was done. That man didn't do well by you and me, mates; the papers I've got prove he didn't. It was to be just a pleasure party out and home, and the guns to be handed over nice and quiet at Caracas, and all of us to earn enough to buy grog-shops when the trip was done. Well, I'd sell my grog-shop cheap this day—sure and certain I would!"

He filled his pipe and lit it angrily. Watson, the boy, was telling a Chinaman, with much picturesque detail, exactly how the captain died.

"I saw the knife do it," the lad said; "and he went 'ouch, ouch,' just like that, and then he scratched the boards with his fingers and drew his legs up. He walloped me yesterday, so I didn't care. He was always wallopin' me; I'm black and blue right down to my shins!"

"And so you deserve to be," said old Joe, reprovingly. "What's boys like you got to do with it? You run off and see if Mr. Fenton wants you; perhaps you might hear what they're saying up there. I'll give you sixpence if you tell us anything, lad."

Bath, the quartermaster, thought that this offer savored of riotous extravagance, and the German heard it with right down contempt.

"How shall your sixpence help you?" he inquired sarcastically. "Here you zail to the rope, and vy? Because you are poltroons—that is vy, and no oder reason. Run up the Sherman flag and make yourself safe at Caracas! Sheneral Matos will pay the pill—vy not? It is common zenze!"

"That be blowed," said Bath, the quartermaster. "We're into the hole,

and German flags aren't going to pull us out. I'll tell you what, though; Fenton's the man who could see us through if he had the mind to, and I've got to learn what keeps us back from him. Here we are, all in the wrong boat together, and Fenton no better off than the rest of us. Who's going to save his neck, I ask you? It ain't German flags, no, nor Chinese flags neither. We're took at both ends, mates, and precious bad at that!"

Old Joe remarked that any warship, English, American, or German would probably blow them to Krüger and back just by way of a holiday jaunt; and thereafter the conversation became desultory, and singularly characteristic of a seaman's inability to realize the nature of the tragedy or its relation to his own life. Here they were, mutineers upon a quasi-pirate—a ship bearing arms to the rebels of Venezuela, liable to be shot or hanged or drowned as the occasion might dictate; yet give them a full pipe, a mug of coffee, and a mess of soup, and to-morrow did not exist for them. When Watson, the boy, came down from the chart-room and added his dish of gossip, they listened at first with phlegmatic interest, and were not aroused until the imminence of the danger became apparent.

"You hand over that sixpence," said the boy to old Joe, with a leer of triumph. "Here's Mr. Fenton telling him as you're all dead and buried, and no mistake neither."

"You don't mean that," cried old Joe, surprised in spite of himself.

"I do indeed; you're to swing at Port of Spain. Them as is lucky will rot in irons—that's what the black 'un says. You're a flock of silly sheep, and they ain't afraid of you no longer."

"Oh, ain't they?" said old Joe, crest-fallen but disbelieving. "Well, look here, youngster, seeing as I've got to swing anyway, suppose as I begin by trying the rope on your back, you little liar!"

Watson leaped nimbly to the companion in the face of this dire threat, and from the vantage-ground of the second step he continued with infantine simplicity to cheer and enlighten them.

"Don't you go calling me a liar, 'cause I ain't, Mr. Joseph. You're going to die, and you'd better be preparing yourself. Here's the English gentleman saying that he'd whip you all with a birch broom. Why don't you think of your latter end? That's what the English gentleman says. You ought to know better than calling honest boys liars at your time of life. Now, don't you touch me, or I'll holler!"

They did not touch him, fearing that his yells might bring Fenton down upon them, but they all sat drawing heavily at their pipes and wondering by what means they might bribe him to a full and free confession.

"I'll give you my coffee if you'll behave yourself, Watson."

"Don't want it; they give me real coffee up-stairs. Yours ain't decent grounds."

"You shall clean my vatch," said the German in a burst of generosity.

"It's stopped already—what's the good of that?"

"I'll tell you what, lad," chimed in Bath, the quartermaster, "you tell us what they really did say and I'll give you my old pistol with the two barrels."

Evidently Watson was tempted. He sucked his finger thoroughly and descended a step.

"I can still holler here," he observed cautiously.

"Don't you be afeared; speak right up and that pistol's yours. I've got it in my chest, lad—you shall see it in a moment."

Watson came down another step, and waited until the rusty barrels of the ancient weapon were at length displayed to his covetous gaze. Unable to withdraw his eyes from the contemplation of such a treasure, he came step by step to the table and began to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"He ain't going to put into Charleston, 'cause he don't mean to risk anything now. He'll sell this old ship to General Matos and save his skin. The English gentleman and the lady with him—she says she ain't his wife, but I know different—they're all for striking the flag to this gunboat that's after us, 'cause they say, being English, they don't care; but Mr. Fenton, he's afeared of 'em, and he's running for it. You can hear the engines for yourselves."

He wound up the harangue by making a grab at the pistol and bolting up-stairs. The tidings he had carried were so little welcome yet so obviously true that every man in the fo'castle sprang to his feet and began to gird up his belt, as if the answer must be his and his alone. The German spoke first, but excitement made him incoherent. Old Joe took it up with more restraint, but with an apprehension not less apparent.

"It's true, by the Lord! We're running fourteen knots, mates; and that's the best this ship can do. What's it mean now, what's he a doing of?"



"It means," said Bath quietly, "that we're all dead men if this ship strikes!"

"Then you shall not strike! You poltroons, you shall kill him first before! Up mit you, up to the bridge! You haf the rope round about your necks, and vat you stand gaping stare for? Up mit you, I zay!"

They obeyed him without a word, and headlong like sheep they swarmed up the companion and came out upon the deck. One swift survey of the sun-gold sea, of the anxious faces upon the bridge, of the funnel belching volumes of smoke, but above all of a distant object upon the starboard horizon—the squat masts, the unmistakable shape of a war-boat—told them the whole of the story.

What was the cruiser which pursued them? What flag did she fly? Upon what errand did she steam? They were soon to learn. Fenton's clear voice raised in all the confidence of authority brought them to reason instantly, and found them a gaping crowd at the ladder's foot.

"Steady there!" the order went. "Do you want lead for dinner? Yes, you may look at it! Yonder's a Venezuelan gunboat. Her commander will hang you to the last man if he catches you. Is that what you came up to hear? Good news, my lads, isn't it? Shall we strike or run? I'll take my orders if you'll please to name them."

They did not answer him. Some of them lurched to the bulwarks and stared at the cruiser with stupid eyes; others stuck their hands in their pockets and regarded Fenton with a silent hostility which a word or look might have made active. Up above, upon the bridge, three waited with beating hearts and nerves high-strung for that last declaration which must mean life or death to them.

Would the men risk all in one desperate throw for the command and the ship? There were but four against them and one woman; and for long minutes together the fate of the brave men and the brave girl with them hung in the balance. Murray scanned the frowning faces as for a message which must mean all the best or the worst to him, but they told him nothing. A straw would have turned the balance. Old Joe, the carpenter, spoke at last, and his words were like a douche upon that heated company.

"I'll tell you what, mates," he said quietly; "you do as you please, but since I can't run this ship myself, I'm going to leave Mr. Fenton where he is."

Some one cried out that Joe was always an officers' man, and the German

had already drawn his knife, and taken two steps toward the ladder, when the loud report of a pistol was heard. There stood Watson, the boy, with a smoking weapon in his hand and his face as white as death.

"Please, I didn't!" he stammered. "It worn't me, Mr. Fenton—the blime thing went off by itself. Oh, I do hope I ain't shot the German!"

He had not shot the German—merely sent him flying of sheer fright into the scuppers. While the crew laughed uproariously, Murray dared to breathe. There was safety in laughter, he said—safety and time. The necessity for one was as great as for the other.

"Play up to it, Fenton," he whispered. "Say the engineers are with us. They'll take it from you—of course they will."

Fenton slipped to the railing of the bridge and held up his hand for silence.

"If you weren't blind, my men," he said, "you'd understand that I'm running this ship as fast as crazy engines can move her. Do you suppose we're any better off than you? Is General Matos going to be kind to the man who has arms aboard to turn him out? It's sink or swim together, and that should be plain to you. If you'll stand by me, I'll do what I can for you. If it's the other thing, come up here and tell me so—and the first man who sets his foot on that ladder is as good as carrion. What sort of a tenpenny rag doll do you take me for? Do you suppose I haven't figured it? Well, walk around to the chief engineer and ask him. Maybe you can row this ship if the engines stop! Now you go and think it over, for I've done with you, and I'm going to steam out of danger if I can. I can't waste my breath on a parcel of thick-headed fools. Be off with you to your posts—it makes me sick to see you!"

The men heard him without a word or a gesture. When he had done with it and turned to Murray again, they gathered together and fell to discussing it with much whacking of palms and a nice insistence upon quite unnecessary points. Taught by long years of habit to obey the orders of the man upon the bridge, excitement and rage alone fortified them in resistance; and now that laughter had changed the current of the offensive idea, they reasoned with some shrewdness that the first and only object of the moment was to escape the ship which pursued them so steadily. There she was, plainly to be seen upon the post-quarter; an old-fashioned gunboat with stumpy masts, an

evil-looking funnel, and a great loom of smoke drifting behind her like the devilish tail of some great comet of the deep. If she gained upon them, her advantage was but scarcely perceptible, for the engines of the Royal Scot were shivering in their frames by this time, and her furnaces roared at a white heat. It would be a long chase, the men said; and saying it, they took a full breath and reminded each other that Fenton was the only clever officer among them, and that if he went under, the ship might as well go to glory at once.

Elementary instincts of self preservation signed the truce upon which they were now set as keenly as they had been upon murder ten minutes ago. They must keep Fenton upon the bridge—that idea obsessed them to the exclusion of any other; and more willing seamen than they proved themselves to be for some hours to come never served the captain of a tramp. Nay, so far civility went that luncheon was served in the saloon; and although two of the lunchers had loaded revolvers in their pockets, they might as well have carried pop-guns for any need there was of them.

"It will be London in twenty days after all," Murray said to Jessie when they sat down. "The delay is bad, but it might have been worse. Fenton will tell you that we are coming out all right. Eh, Fenton, isn't it that? Come, man, don't be a pessimist."

"I'm not, sir. There's no room for pessimism on a tramp steamer, as you may judge for yourself. If you ask me a plain question, I will give you a plain answer. We shall sight the Windward Islands before that gunboat picks us up. That is my opinion. I may be wrong, but I stick to it."

"And if you don't sight them—if we are taken, Mr. Fenton, what then?" asked Jessie, who had told herself many times that the strain was wearing her out, but who confessed as much to none. "Is there any Venezuelan ship that would harm a subject of the United States? I don't believe there is. They're frightened of us—everybody's frightened of us, and you know it's true!"

Fenton would not have contradicted such confidence for the world. If British prejudice led him to doubt the exact value of American citizenship at such a crisis, he kept his own counsel, and went on quietly with his dinner.

"Of course you are quite right," he said. "My old-fashioned notions don't get very far away from the bridge of my

own ship, and that's a fact. You are to reach London, Miss Golding; that is why I am making for a British port, even if it is not the port named in my bills. We might go further north, I grant you, and touch at Kingston, where you would get a ship at once, but I have my own reasons for not doing that. Some day I will tell you what they were. We old seamen, you know, are taught the value of holding our tongues. You will forgive me if I cannot say more."

She forgave him with a look, but neither she nor Murray would ever forget how much they owed to this simple-minded, honest seaman. His silence was itself a guarantee of their safety. There was not a man upon the Royal Scot who did not trust Fenton in doubt or difficulty.

"Of course she forgives you," said Murray, taking the defense upon himself. "What's she here for, if it isn't to forgive us both. Look at this miserable sinner, and observe the way he is consuming a particularly indigestible pudding. He knows that he is forgiven. If he were quite sure that you would make Port of Spain before an inquisitive gunboat, he would take another helping. It's got to be done, Fenton; we must outsteam her if we burn the beds! Why, you wouldn't have it said that a fifth-rate tramp is to be put before a daughter of America, who is going to St. George's to be married? Shame on the notion. All Lloyd's would be against you!"

He pushed his plate away from him, and Fenton immediately heaped another serving of the pudding upon it.

"I will answer you like that," said he. "If yonder tub cannot take fifteen knots I am a Dutchman. If you sold up the country, sir, Venezuela could not buy a couple of battleships, and if she could buy them she could not handle them. They'll tell us just now how we are doing, but I have no doubts. We shall be in Port of Spain to-morrow night, and there's an end of it. You can get a steamer from there to Jamaica and go home on one of the West Indian boats. If it takes you more than three weeks to make London, that is not my fault; but it doesn't seem to me that a day or two more or less is of much consequence just now."

Jessie said that it was no consequence at all, and in such a tone of voice that Murray looked at her sharply. Reading deep in her eyes the meaning of her words, his usually pale face flushed a little, and he turned away uneasily.

"I agree," he said. "It is of no consequence at all. We joke about these things, but I think we must all thank God in our hearts that we are alive to speak of them. When I write a book, I shall perhaps be able to tell others what I cannot tell myself just yet. If you asked me, Fenton, I would say it was all a nightmare. I don't believe the Winona ever was built, or if she was built, she is not at the bottom of the sea. The rest is equally nebulous. There never was a raft, and the Royal Scot does not exist. Can you understand it?"

Fenton shook his head. He had been through too many perils by land and water to lose his perspective.

"I don't understand it at all," he said. "What about the young lady, for instance? Isn't she real?"

"Mr. West will not admit that," said Jessie quickly. "He is too fond of the delusion. I am like an old leather trunk that you send off by express. It is a relief to get rid of it and to hand over the check to some one else. He has been telling me so ever since he saved my life. It was 'London, London, London' all day on the raft, and he can't think of anything else even now. I'm sure he'll dance for joy when he sees me on another ship."

"You know that I don't dance," said Murray. "I leave that to your clerical friends. My personal joy will take the shape of a new suit of clothes and some clean collars. Do you remember, Fenton, bringing me an empty money-case the first day I was aboard? You said the contents had been stolen. Well, so they had, by a couple of sharpers on the Winona. I put the notes there to be stolen; they represented about four hundred pounds in bad money. If a gentleman named Sedgwick ever gets to England, he will probably do seven years. My own money was in my belt—we may need all of it at Port of Spain."

Murray related this little story as if it were a trifle to amuse them at the table, but his real purpose was to let Jessie know that he could help her to England when the moment came. She had never thought anything at all about the matter of money, and it was not until he broached it that she understood how dependent upon him she was at every step of this fateful pilgrimage.

"You think of everything, Mr. West!" she exclaimed a little sadly. "Why, I was in such a fluster that I even left my jewelry behind, and as for money, who could remember that when a ship's sinking? I shall have to cable to my father

from Port of Spain, and tell him to come and fetch me."

The thought of others is rarely possible to us in the fret and rush of incident. We need not charge selfishness against those who, finding their first obligation to themselves, are indifferent for the moment to the anxieties of their kinsfolk. So swiftly had events moved since the terrible night when the Winona added one to the long roll of steamships doomed upon the high seas, that any recollection of those at home, their sorrow, and their suspense, had perforce been momentary and in some sense unreal. But now when the clouds were lifting and a glimmer of light beyond them might be seen, Jessie remembered, and in her remembrance there was both joy and sorrow.

## XVI.

KELLY, the second officer, had been upon the bridge during the luncheon hour, but he came down while they were still sitting at the table and reported an unwelcome fact.

"She's coming up, sir," he exclaimed a little abruptly. "I hope I'm wrong, but I should like you to see. There's more of her above the horizon than there was an hour ago. I think it must be the Restaurador. The Venezuelans have only one gunboat of that shape, so it must be her. I wish you'd come up right now, Mr. Fenton, and tell me what you think."

All quitted the table abruptly at this ill news, and hastily followed Kelly to the bridge, where a single glance justified his alarm. There, on the starboard quarter, the gunboat was plainly to be seen, and while all the facts concerning her had been but a surmise heretofore, Fenton's splendid glass confirmed them before many minutes had passed. Even Murray's untrained eye could perceive how rapidly the strange ship gained upon them, while the dense volumes of smoke pouring from her funnel, and the crescent of foam at her bows, bore witness to the frantic exertions of her crew.

"She's gaining hand over foot," said Fenton quietly. "If she holds on like that, eight bells to-night will strike our flag. I don't like it, Mr. West, I don't like it at all!"

He fell to pacing the bridge like some caged animal which turns restlessly to and fro, seeking a gate to the endless bars. They all understood how real was his fear. The men below, clustered together in discontented groups, would

glance from time to time at his impassive face as if to read the message of their fate. Would night save them or by night must the end come? No man knew. The two ships rushed onward, one toward its haven, the other upon its prey.

The pursuit endured with varying fortune throughout the long afternoon. A fitful westerly wind, which had blown with some freshness in the forenoon watch, died away until it was not a cat's paw at two bells. From that moment the air seemed charged with some sulphurous heaviness, and the blue sky above was obliterated in a fine mist, unlike anything the men had seen. They would have welcomed a fog at this hour like some good gift of fortune, but no fog fell; nor was the horizon obscured, and both ships remained visible, each to the other, like a black shape against a cold, gray curtain.

Whatever advantage had been gained by the Restaurador in the morning hours, she failed to make good as the day drew on. In the distance between the two ships there was no change which even a seaman might detect. From time to time, perhaps, as a supreme effort at the furnaces drove one or the other to abnormal speed, and the whole sea about was a dense cloud of suffocating smoke, there would be a momentary shifting of position which would re-animate hope or baffle it; but in the main the battle was a drawn one, whose doubtful issue drove the crew of the Royal Scot to new frenzies of labor and to new threats against those who would have saved them.

No man aboard now but did not go willingly to the stoke-hole and there take the place of the sinking firemen. Weird forms, half naked and covered from head to foot with black sweat, sent their long shovels and their rakes into the fiery eyes of the steaming boilers, caring nothing for bell or watch or anything but their own safety. Words of encouragement, words of despair, spurred them to the task. They knew not precisely what they had to fear from the Venezuelan gunboat, but plain fact told them that they were dealing with a half-barbarous nation—blockaders running a cargo of arms to a state which cared nothing for the law of nations and much for the virtue of the rope. Rightly or wrongly, they believed that the gunboat's commander would shoot or hang them on sight; and if their fears were ignorant and premature, they were none the less effective.

Never since she was built, had the Royal Scot plunged through the long

Atlantic swells as she plunged that day—her steel plates shivering in the bolts, her masts trembling, her engines racing until the very beams threatened to be burnt away. And through it all the cry of gain and loss went up, the oaths, the threats of rogues who had not done a decent day's work in all their lives, but who now atoned in one short hour for the leisure of the past. Such as these fought to reach the engine-room ladder, fought with one another at the bunker's mouth, were fighting still as the coal was pitched into the gaping furnaces and the flames licked it up. Night must find them beyond the range of the pursuer's guns.

Fenton never left the bridge, nor did he communicate his own thoughts to any one. From time to time, in answer to Jessie's staccato questions, he would say "Oh, she'll do," or "It's well enough," or again "I really cannot tell you"; but more than this he would not say, and for the best of reasons, that any man on the ship was as well able to judge the situation as he. What breath he had for words he devoted to the engineers and those in the stoke-hole. Again and again he cried out for more steam, applauded their efforts, and sent new men to assist them, until they began to realize that he put no less a price upon successful flight than they did.

Murray, in the chart-room, remarked every inflection of that usually cold voice, and he confessed to Jessie that he would sooner have seen the first officer silent than loquacious.

"Fenton's anxious," he said reflectively. "It's the first time I've seen him so since we were on the ship. Just look at the way he walks up and down—like a tiger in the zoo, you might say, if it were not Fenton. I suppose he's got it in his head that a Venezuelan is another name for a cut-throat. I think he is wrong, but I don't tell him so. A navy is not a good training ground for rogues, even a South American navy. The commander of that ship would probably treat us decently. It's only my surmise, of course, but I hold to it."

Jessie shook her head, and, leaning far back in the deck chair, which a susceptible steward had discovered among the treasures of the Royal Scot, she took Fenton's part.

"My father was once in Venezuela on a railway commission, Murray. He used to say that he would sooner have been in prison. All the women wanted to marry him and all the men to shoot him. I think Mr. Fenton is quite right. We



know what we are doing here, but that steamer's a lottery. Father said he would sooner go into a wild beast den than visit Caracas again. He doesn't like pistols, and he hates women. Mr. Fenton's the same, isn't he?"

"Oh, Fenton's a good fellow," Murray admitted willingly. "He has his head screwed on the right way. No doubt he thinks it is for the best, and of course he has a valuable consignment on board—amongst other things, one young lady in a hurry to get married. You will have to write the story of your engagement some day, Jessie, and dedicate it to me. 'Through Fire and Water to Hanover Square.' I venture to think you won't better the title."

Jessie turned her head away, and gazed through the window of the chart-room, wherefrom she could see the misty horizon and the black cloud which almost obscured the outline of the pursuing ship. Murray's light talk hurt her ears to-day, and she was in no mood to respond to it. The sustained excitement of the earlier hours forbade her wholly to realize this hour and the issue it should decide. The vaguest ideas of past and present, and even of her own future, quelled excitement and left her almost indifferent. She was not angry with Murray, for she knew that he sought to distract her attention; but the knitted brows, the restless eyes, and the nervous twitching of his hands, denoted concealment. Every word that he spoke was punctuated by a glance at the pursuing ship.

"We shall know everything to-morrow, shan't we?" Jessie said, after a silence.

Murray answered her very seriously.

"You will know to-night, Jessie, I promise you that—to-night."

She understood him. That night would answer her question once for all, giving her the best or the worst, as her destiny had written it. The flippant mood became her own thereafter, and she fell to chattering of a hundred every-day affairs; of her summer at Newport, and her last visit to Europe, of her father's house on Fifth Avenue and why she liked Paris; of her friends in England, and their anxieties. In this Murray encouraged her, his eyes upon the horizon always, but his laughter no less light than hers, and his tenderness toward her un-failing.

## XVII.

At one bell in the first dog watch, the Restaurador made one of those supreme efforts which had shown fitfully during

the day. Racing up at a great speed through the heavy mists, she presently fired a shell across the bows of the Royal Scot. The missile went plunging into the sea with a hissing sound which drew many of Fenton's men to the bulwarks and sent others flat upon their faces.

Murray, in the chart-room, hearing the sound of firing, made an abrupt end of a wild tale, with which he had been trying to divert Jessie's attention. Running out upon the deck, he was just in time to see a second shell plump into the water not a biscuit-toss from the propeller of the ship.

"Good God, Fenton," he cried, "are they firing shell?"

"That's so, Mr. West!"

"Then what are our fellows doing?"

"You can see for yourself. They are working like niggers."

"It has come suddenly, Fenton!"

"These things generally do, sir. I don't think a shell often trots."

He laughed ironically as a third shot struck the fo'-castle hatch and filled the air with a cloud of splinters.

"Doesn't look like marbles, does it?" he went on grimly. "We'll have to strike in five minutes if this goes on."

"Then they'll come aboard here?"

"Yes, I fancy they'll do that."

"We must stop that, Fenton! If Miss Golding falls into their hands—but we mustn't let her. What are the men doing? Why don't you send more of them into the stoke-hole? Can't you see how urgent it is?"

Fenton did not lose his temper; he understood the meaning of these incoherent questions, and he bore with them.

"They're head over heels together down there now. What more can they do? No, Mr. West, we must sit tight and whistle. I think you should take Miss Golding to the saloon. They'll knock this band-box of a chart-room all to ribbons just now. She's better downstairs."

Jessie answered for herself, standing at the chart-room door and plainly showing that she understood.

"No, Mr. Fenton, she's not. Her place is right here, and she's not going to change it. Don't call me a coward, Murray—please don't call me that!"

"Impossible! You are only rash. Well, have your own way. It's a dangerous way, Jessie—a very dangerous way!"

"And yours?" she asked him. "Oh, do you think that I feel nothing for others, then? Have I a heart of stone, Murray?"

"I know that you have not." He spoke in a very low voice; and then he turned away and would not look at her. She stood so close to him that he could feel the whisper of her breath upon his cheek, and when the gun belched fire and smoke again, he took a step instinctively as if to shield her. In the excitement of the shot's flight, their hands were interlocked, they waited for the end almost heart to heart.

The shell fell into the sea a cable's length behind them. So much, apparently, had the Royal Scot gained in the lull of the pursuer's effort. The men on deck raised a hoarse cheer; it was echoed in the inferno where the scarlet figures plied their shovels and men were baking as meat upon a jack.

"Look at that," cried Fenton, surprised for an instant. "We shall best them yet, by heaven! Well done, my lads—there's grog for that—well done!"

He cried to the stewards to serve rum in the engine-room—an order he would never have given but as a last desperate resource. While the men were clamoring for it, and the pannikins were chinking, yet another shell just touched the coamings of the main deck hatch, and, carrying iron and wood in its path, struck a negro full upon the legs above his knees, and left him a maimed and bleeding hulk. None of those above saw the man, for the bridge-deck hid him from their view. They were assuring themselves that no harm was done at the very moment when the negro's body rolled into the scuppers.

"A little premature, weren't you, Fenton?" Murray asked him almost reproachfully. "You should have kept that grog, I'm thinking."

Fenton shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the enveloping mists all about them.

"I don't know what to believe, sir; this air deceives a man. Did you ever breathe anything like it? Burnt cinders and steam I call it, and in the Atlantic, too! If there's much more of the same sort to come, we'll both have to strike, I reckon. Just look ahead there—it's a mountain alight, I could swear; and yet I know it's only cloud. I wonder what the gunboat is going to make of that! Not much, you may be sure."

It was certainly a remarkable phenomenon, and even the galling excitement of the chase was forgotten for an instant before that lurid spectacle. The whole of the western heavens were now obscured by fantastic shapes fashioning

themselves against the curtain of the zenith. While the sun still shone low down upon the water, clearing itself a path as of gamboge and amber upon a blue-gray sea, the higher altitudes were dark with mighty cones of cloud, shifting and weird and wind-borne. Their bulk was variable and quickly changing, and the light which they gave or shut out was akin to the gloom of twilight or the deeper darkness of the night.

The air itself was heavy as the breath of fire, and a thin mist of the finest white dust began to fall upon the steamer—a mist not of sleet or snow, but unlike anything the men had seen, and so scorching to lungs and palate that those on the deck gasped and fought for breath, and the men in the engine-room came headlong up the ladder and swore they could do no more. It was such a sudden transformation, a *dénouement* at once so terrifying and full of surprise, that even the Restaurador and her guns were forgotten.

The men gaped at the veil upon the sky and asked what in God's name it meant. They cared no longer now for shot or shell or any prison which might await them; but one idea animated them, the fight for air and light and water to quench their intolerable thirst. Some at the casks, some hanging over the bulwarks that the salt foam might wet their lips, they gave way to that panic of fear with which the evidence of things unknown can inflict the ignorant. Believing that death was upon them, they turned their blasphemies upon the very man who had waged so good a battle for their lives.

Fenton, however, heard them with supreme indifference, and his first thought was as ever, for the weakest upon his ship.

"Take Miss Golding into that cabin, sir," he said to Murray, when he had breath to speak at all. "God knows what it is. I have never seen anything like it. If we don't get out of it in ten minutes, we are all dead men. Do you go inside and shut the windows. My throat's on fire!"

He had already cried an order to put the ship about, and now they turned and ran full south toward safety and the light. Side by side with them, racing for the open sea, went the gunboat; and these two, hard set in flight and pursuit not ten minutes ago, were henceforth as sister ships upon a common purpose of salvation.

For many minutes together you heard

no sound upon the deck of the Royal Scot but the hard breathing of men in agony, and the groans of those who believed that they were dying. Even Fenton, standing like a figure of iron by the wheel, could not hide his distress; but he did not quit his post, and when Murray insisted upon standing at his side, he still had voice to tell the brave fellow of his folly.

"Miss Golding—think of her first, sir. You've no right here!"

"Every right, Fenton. It's turn and turn about. You go in and breathe—I'm at the wheel!"

"I can't do it, sir; my place is here. Did you ever see anything like it? The heaven's afire and raining dust. What do you think it is?"

"I know what it is, Fenton. It's a volcano—you can tell that by the dust. One of the Windward group is active; I feel sure of it. We must keep away south, Fenton—I see light there."

"I'm doing it, sir. God help us all, look at that!"

The remark escaped him as a small fore-and-aft schooner took shape in the mists, and passed under their stern as they went by her. The ship had all her sails set, but they were aflame and burning in little jets of fire which gas might have fed, while her decks presented a spectacle from which they turned sick at heart and terrified. It was all so sudden that the fog enveloped the schooner before they could come to any resolution; and all trace of her had disappeared when next they looked.

"Did you see that, Fenton? A poor devil there was burning from head to foot."

"I saw it, Mr. West. It may be our turn next. My lungs are like hot coal. Can you see any light anywhere?"

"It's clearer a little west of south—bear up, Fenton, we'll see each other through!"

"Oh, yes, we'll do that! Can you take the wheel a minute? That fellow's going blind, I think."

"I'll try, Fenton; it isn't the first time I've steered a steamship. Pray God it won't be the last!"

Silence fell for a little while, and a hush upon the ship seemed to emphasize the intensity of the crisis. In the wheel-house, Murray was sheltered somewhat from the intolerable scorching dust; and if he pitied the quartermaster who lay half-dead at his feet, he could not even stretch out a hand to save him.

Yonder, over the seas, shone the still

pool of golden light wherein all might be won and the reward be reaped. Murray saw that this was the supreme hour of his manhood when every nerve, every muscle, brain and body alike, must wage the grim fight for the life of the woman he loved; and so resolving, he tried to put the thought of physical pain from him. He shut his teeth, and in his heart said "It shall be!"

In the stress of this resolve the minutes passed—intolerable minutes, when all things swam before his eyes, his tongue could utter no word, and his eyes were half blinded; and still he stood and wondered that reason remained to him.

For a woman's name was his staff and her image was before him, and when he fell at last insensible, upon the body of the brave man at his feet, he believed that this was death for her and for him.

### XVIII.

UPON a morning of July, some two months after the Royal Scot had raced side by side with the Venezuelan gunboat Restaurador and the burning dust from Mont Pelée had decided the issue of the flight, a smart reporter entered the hall of the Palace Hotel at Liverpool and asked a porter whether Lord Woodridge was up.

"From the Liverpool *Standard*," he said, "and I won't keep him a minute. Just take my card up and say I can wait."

The porter turned over the card in his greasy fingers, and when he had looked at it for some time as though a little ashamed of his social ignorance, he remarked:

"Lord Woodridge? There ain't no Lord Woodridge here. I'll ask the clerk."

The clerk was no better informed. He turned the pages of a heavy visitors' book and ran an ink-stained thumb down them like a trained servant of figures, but the name that he sought was not to be found.

"No," he said, "he hasn't come yet. Perhaps he's on the Teutonic, which arrives to-morrow."

The reporter stretched out his hand for the book and asked to be allowed to look for himself. He was not accustomed to take "no" for an answer.

"I know he's here, because my people have had a telegram. He came last night on the boat from Kingston. There's a young American lady with him—Miss Golding, who is to marry Lord Eastry."

The clerk needed no further enlightenment.

"Why," he exclaimed with sudden

understanding, "there's no Lord Woodridge with her. She came with a Mr. West—a tall, lightly-built man with eyes like an eagle. You don't mean him, I suppose?"

The reporter slapped his thigh in the delight of a mystery solved.

"Of course," he exclaimed, "that's the man! He only came into the title last Christmas you know, and he's been ten years in America. Just take my card up to him and say I will wait. He's sure to see me if he comes from New York. They are born to be interviewed there!"

The clerk expressed the pious opinion that he wished some of them were born to be hanged, but he sent the card upstairs nevertheless. The reporter enlightened the interval of waiting with a cigarette and a supercilious glance at the occupants of the hall. Possibly he examined them with an eye to the process, for the interviewing habit had grown upon him, and there was little on the earth below or in the heaven above that he rated from any other standpoint than that of his note-book. He was still engaged in that businesslike survey when the porter returned and invited him upstairs.

"He'll see you," said the man, "if you are sharp. He's a rum 'un, I tell you—makes me skip when he looks at me."

"Ah," said the reporter, with an immense sense of the superiorities of knowledge, "he has been used to driving niggers, you know."

He found his victim in a small sitting-room upon the first floor. Murray wore a smoking-suit purchased the night before in Liverpool, and his breakfast of tea and toast was untouched on the table before him. A litter of telegrams upon his knee spoke of discovery and greeting, while a box of cigarettes at his right hand confessed a smoker's contemplation. When the reporter entered he just looked up, and then without a word pointed to a chair.

"Lord Woodridge, I believe."

"Yes, that's so. What's your business?"

"I am from the local *Standard*, my lord. If you would be so good as to answer a few questions——"

"Ah," said Murray with a gesture, "you wish me to think that I am still in America?"

"Oh, no, my lord, really not. We don't want anything private—nothing about your affairs. It is about the Winona. I have been given to understand that you were on board of her, and we thought

that a few particulars would be interesting to your lordship's admirers."

"Admirers? Great heavens, man, don't be an ass! You probably know more about the Winona than I do—yes, I am sure you do. Suppose we reverse the process. I will interview you for a change." He pushed the cigarettes across the table, and laid his fingers upon the button of a bell near by. "Is it whisky or brandy? I find the press somewhat monotonous in the matter of its beverages."

The reporter was greatly shocked.

"I am a teetotaler, my lord," he cried, with a condemnatory wave of a far from clean hand. "I put down much of my success to that."

"Excellent! Go on as you are doing, and some day you will be prime minister! You can tell me, to begin with, something about the Winona. They had no news of her when I was at Kingston, and naturally we got none coming across. These telegrams may tell me what I want to find out, but you can anticipate them. How many were drowned that night? I don't even know that yet."

The reporter lit a cigarette, and showed his appreciation of the opportunity by a long narration, of which we shall venture to omit all but the small part germane to our narrative.

"You were sunk by a tramp collier from Cardiff," he began. "She stood by you in the fog, and her boats picked up ninety-two of your people. There were sixty women saved in the lifeboats, and they all got on the tramp before morning. One way and the other, and as far as we can learn, very nearly two hundred were saved out of the seven hundred passengers she appears to have had on board. Every one admits that the captain of the Idris—that was the tramp's name—did his best. He says he came right on to you amidsthips in the fog, and he didn't know for nearly an hour whether he could keep his own steamer afloat. It was a very dreadful business, my lord. Nearly all the poor people in the steerage seem to have been drowned, and there were twenty young ladies from the Casino company, in New York, of whom only one was saved. You know, of course, that Miss Golding's relative was in the first boat that was picked up. I understand she has remained in America."

"This telegram says so," said Murray, holding up one of the many pink forms. "Do you happen to know if the elder Mr. Golding has remained in London?"



"I don't know, sir. They said he was terribly cut up, and unable to leave his hotel for some weeks. No one here believed that there could be any other survivors. It was a clever idea of yours, I must say. 'Pon my word, I should never have thought of it!"

Murray looked at the reporter, and admitted that he probably would not. To voice such a sentiment, however, would not have been polite.

"Do you know if the Rev. St. John Trew, the vicar of Sackville Street, was saved?" he asked next.

"Oh, yes, my lord. The parson came up like Noah out of the Ark. He was six hours hanging to an oar. You can't get into his church since he came back."

"Blessed are the uses of advertisement! I could imagine that Noah might have been a fine subject for an interview, with headlines, and the private opinions of Ham upon the discoveries of the voyage. That, unfortunately, is lost to posterity, but I am glad that the reverend gentleman is alive. You can't tell me the same of Captain Ross, I am sure?"

"No, my lord, he went down with his ship."

"Ah, he would do that! The old story, of course. Down with his ship! Do you wonder that we like to sail with British seamen?"

"I don't, my lord. I always sail with them when I go for my holiday."

As the young gentleman's holiday was usually an unexciting trip to the Isle of Man, the admission did not stand for as much as it might have done. Murray's politeness, however, construed it in a larger sense.

"Ah, you are a traveler, then," he said. "Have you ever visited Martinique?"

"No, I have not, my lord, and I will take precious good care I don't, either. Forty thousand people killed in a few minutes! I am for England, thank you."

"You are a wise man. I owe something to Martinique, nevertheless. Has any one told you that Miss Golding and I were saved by Martinique?"

"Yes, my lord, a telegram from Kingston said that."

"Then you know that we should have been knocked off splinters but for the dust-cloud from Mont Pelée. We ran into it with the Venezuelan gunboat Restaurador at our heels. The men went down like flies—ten of them died within an hour, and amongst them one of the best seamen that ever trod a deck, Jack Fen-

ton by name. I was in the wheel-house, and I owe my life to the fact. When I recovered consciousness two hours later, face downward on the floor, I found myself on board an American battleship. Such things it is difficult to talk about; but if you want a picture for your paper, your artist has a great opportunity. Tell him that a big steamer ran a mad race without pilot or helmsman, until her fires died down and the boilers gave out, and that there was not a man aboard her capable of lifting a hand to alter her course or close her throttle. That's something new in phantom ships, isn't it? There we were lying in heaps about the deck, and the engines throbbed and the foam flew, and that steel hulk unguided, unattended, raced us out to safety. You want an Edgar Allan Poe or a Marryat to tell that as it should be told. I am far too practical. My imagination concerns itself for the moment with the somewhat pleasant fact that I am alive."

"Indeed, we thought you were dead, my lord. Your cousin, Mr. Arthur West, is already at the hall, I believe."

"I am delighted to hear it. He is very welcome there. Please leave these private reflections out of anything which you may write, and don't let this conversation appear in your paper until I have left Liverpool."

"In the ordinary course it would appear to-morrow morning, my lord. Would you have any objection to that?"

"None at all. I shall be two hundred miles away from Liverpool to-morrow morning."

"Then I may say something about Miss Golding, too, I suppose?"

"By all means. Say that she is well and very glad to be here. I can't give you any further authorization."

"She is to marry Lord Eastry, I believe?"

"Really, I cannot discuss a young lady's private affairs."

"But I may tell them how she was saved from the Royal Scot?"

"Oh, certainly. she was in the chart-room—I closed the windows myself and bolted them. She did not know what we were doing, and when she discovered the truth the danger was past. The American commander struck a ship full of apparently dead men and a woman trying to steer it. I don't think that anything you could say of Miss Golding's courage would be an exaggeration. It has been her lot to go through an experience rare in the life of any woman, and she behaved nobly."

*(To be continued.)*

# The Sergeant's Valet.

HOW NICODEMUS, THE FILIPINO, EARNED A CHANCE TO SHINE AT THE BAR.

BY M. G. CONGER.

## I.

[T is not customary, even in the Philippines and among volunteers, for a non-commissioned officer to have a body-servant. Consequently little Nicodemus brought upon the master he had adopted many jeers and much good-natured ridicule at the hands of the men of Troop B. The young sergeant had rescued him from some members of the Katipunan who were enthusiastically engaged in flogging him to death as an *Americanista* because he had been discovered trying to learn English. Since that day the boy had followed his deliverer with the devotion of a collie. He was only sixteen, and small even for his age and race, but so quick, alert, and thoughtful that he would have satisfied the most exacting demands. The sergeant's "valet," as the men chaffingly dubbed him, could mend as neatly as a girl. Since it was for the *sargento*, he could even bend his young masculine pride to the woman's work of washing. But when the other men tried, by bribe or order, to avail themselves of his services, he put the first off with an amiable "*Poco tiempo*," and cheerfully failed to understand a word of the second.

Both his Spanish and his English seemed very uncertain quantities, and his strain of Chinese blood gave him such an infantile blandness of expression, and such an ability to render his little round face absolutely vacant of intelligence, as made more than one of the men want to kick him.

It may have been due to the personal loyalty of the Filipino, or to the fact that he had something of the same subtle instinct as the Southern darky, and was able to recognize the gentleman under the obliterating garb of the volunteer; but which ever it was, while he would do nothing for any one else, there was nothing he would not do for his recognized master. Wherever Hughes went, there Nicodemus trudged faithfully after. However long and hard the "hike," the next morning found the sergeant's clothes and accouterments spotless and shining. More than once must the little

fellow have sat up all night, steadily brushing and polishing by the scanty light of the native oil-cup.

As a result of his labors, there was no more immaculate "non-com" to be met in the islands. Unfortunately, another result was that the sergeant found himself with more spare time than is altogether good in the tropics.

Hughes reveled in his leisure, and in the knowledge that his worldly possessions were never so safe as when in the little native's watchful care. Here, alas, the young Filipino's honesty stopped. Agile as a monkey, covetous as a magpie, he was cordially detested by the officers, who soon found that no piece of money, no glittering trinket, could escape his nimble fingers if left within their reach.

"It's no use, sergeant," the captain at last exclaimed; "you'll have to whip him."

But, like a true native, Nicodemus, though he howled vigorously, took his punishments with great good-nature—that is, when they were for stealing. If whipped for lying, he sulked for hours. That he should be punished for thieving was a matter of course. It was the natural consequence of detection, and in no way a deterrent from further peculations; but why he should be chastised for the harmless practise of lying was a problem too deep for his Filipino brain to solve.

Seeing the hopelessness of reformation, the captain finally ordered him sent away. This order the sergeant duly executed, deporting the boy to a village some forty miles off. Two days later Nicodemus was found, exhausted and travel-stained, sound asleep in front of the barracks. After that he was put in the same category as the mosquitoes—an unmitigated nuisance, but unavoidable.

Then the sergeant essayed moral suasion.

"Nicodemus, you no steal from me. My friends all same me. You steal from my friends, all same steal from me. Sabe?"

This was an appeal to loyalty, and the boy, after pondering a moment, acquiesced. The next morning, squatting on