

# 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 Eastry, 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. Among the other passengers are Herbert Laidlaw, a friend of West's, and Marx and Sedgwick, two gamblers, who inveigle Laidlaw into a game of poker and are despoiling him when Murray West, an old gambler himself, takes a hand and turns the tables on them. In revenge Marx threatens to tell Jessie Golding of West's connection with the death of her brother Lionel, which occurred during a fracas in the frontier town of Jackson City, but West defies him. Later Jessie herself tells Murray of her grief at her brother's death, and bitterly denounces his slayer. Murray acknowledges having witnessed the shooting of Lionel Golding, and tells the girl that her brother 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 bound for South America. The drunken captain, Tod Keen, demurs at interrupting his voyage to rescue the castaways, but is finally coerced by the firm stand of the mate, Fenton, and a boat is sent to pick Murray and Jessie up.

## XI (Continued).

THUS brought to bay, Captain Tod Keen leaned against the chart-room window and laughed inanely.

"Did I touch you?" he asked incoherently. "Nonsense—that's my joke—you know it is!"

"Then you play it on some one else."

"All right, Fenton. You needn't be so uppish. Where's the boat? What are those dirty niggers doing?"

"They are bringing a man and woman on board here; you had better remember your company manners, if you ever had any."

"A woman? Don't play the tenderfoot on me, Fenton. How has a woman got there? You are lying."

"Then I learned the habit from you. If you don't believe me, look yonder."

Captain Tod lurched to the end of the bridge and steadied himself against the indicator to take another look through his spy-glass. The boat certainly was returning. From time to time you saw it mounting the crest of a wave, and then slipping down, like a car upon a rail, into the mighty hollow. As it came nearer, Tod Keen began in his muddled way to realize what had happened. Six men had

manned the boat when she left the ship; he counted eight people in her as she returned, and the figure of one huddled up in the stern was undoubtedly that of a woman. The discovery sobered the captain in a moment.

"Why, here's a game!" he said, turning on Fenton with an uncouth laugh. "It's a woman, as sure as thunder. What are we to do with her, Fenton? A woman, to be the solace and comfort of my old age! Oh, my stars!"

Fenton turned his back upon him, and he went on jesting coarsely and repeating his idle speculations; and presently he roared to the boatsman below to send the steward to him.

"Here, you, get the cabin aft the galley clear. Do you hear me, you son of a dirty swab? Get it clear before I come and set about you. There's a lady coming aboard. Make ready for her, do you hear? And tell that lubber of a cook to get his kettle going. Ho, ho, a lady! If this don't beat all!"

The idea both amused him and appealed to his vanity. He went into his cabin, as he put it, to "clean himself." Fenton, on the bridge, heard him puffing and blowing as he slushed his face with water and brushed his bristly hair.

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Meanwhile the lookout had hailed the boat. Fenton, at the bridge's end, obtained his first glimpse of Jessie as she lay, half inanimate, drenched to the skin, and very pale, in Murray's arms.

"The gangway ladder, men!" he shouted. "Over with it! Some of you help the lady up. Now, then, quick's the word!"

Seamen all the world over love to help a woman, and there were a dozen sturdy volunteers at the ladder's head when Murray, holding Jessie in his arms, stepped out of the boat and began to climb.

"Thank you, thank you," he said to them all, "I can do very well with just a hand—that's it, my good fellow—ah, if you knew what this meant to us, nine hours in the water and nine out! Oh, yes, the smoke was a blue light I popped in my pocket just before going over; smoke's better than fire when the sun shines, isn't it? Is that the captain—no? Well, I'd like to thank him, of course. I'm just wet, my man, wet to the very bone. Oh, the young lady will pull through all right! Much obliged—now, if you have any hot brandy, and blankets—heaps and piles of blankets! Are there any women on the ship? What, a negress? Well, she'll do. Thank you!"

It all came in a breath, the honest gratitude, the joy, the thankfulness, of a man snatched from the very jaws of death, yet speaking less for himself than for the girl whose life he had cherished with such sacrifice and self-devotion. Jessie, to be sure, had swooned when help came at last—hope long baffled, the agony of the doubt, the dreadful trial ending in this ultimate deliverance, had required some such reaction. But it was nothing worse than a swoon, and when they carried her into the cabin, and the old negress had stripped and rolled her in the blankets, and willing hands had chafed her lifeless limbs, she opened her eyes and asked for Murray.

"Is that the gentleman who carried you aboard? Well, he's sleeping, miss."

She looked up in amazement—the cabin, the faces, how strange they were! For seven long hours the sea had been washing her limbs, and the rime of the spindrift had caked in salt flakes upon her lips. Jessie did not realize her safety even yet.

"Who is this man?" she asked of the old negress.

"That am de captain, missie, our own kind captain hisself."

"Then take him out of my cabin at once."

"No offense, miss—you're my guest, you know. 'Pon my life, I'm very glad—say the word and the whole ship's yours. Would you fancy a bottle of champagne, now? We've some aboard."

"Go away!" said Jessie indignantly. "Go away at once, please!"

"Oh, well, I'm only trying to do my best. Don't you be frightened to send for me if you want me. I'm off to see your friend—or is he your brother? Well, it doesn't matter, anyway; he is looking pretty bad, poor chap. I guess he'll be glad of a little spirit to mix with the water he's swallowed. Now, you make yourself quite at home on this ship. We haven't much accommodation for ladies, but such as it is you are welcome to it. Make that old hag bustle! It'll do her good to trot around."

Captain Tod nodded affably, as if greatly pleased at his own condescension. Stepping out of the cabin, he greeted Fenton with an inane leer.

"Getting through my powwow," he said meaningly; and then he asked, "What have you done with the man?"

"Put him in the cabin next to mine," said Fenton dryly.

"Oh, parlor manners! Well, I suppose it is all right. I'll go and have a jaw with him. A lanky-looking sort of a ragged-tailed poet, isn't he? I wonder if he's her brother."

"You'd better ask him," said Fenton curtly.

The reticent first officer did not deem it necessary to explain that his foot had helped the lazy crew to clear the cabin and prepare it for this unexpected passenger; but Fenton had liked the stranger from the first, and had done his best for him. When Captain Tod introduced himself to Murray, the Rogue was up to his neck in blankets, and a steaming glass of hot rum and water simmered by his side. He was still in that excited state which attends nervous reaction, and he talked away without a break.

"We broke a propeller three days ago, and lay like a hulk. A fog came down, and I smelt collisions. There weren't enough boats, so I looked after myself. The girl and I were nearly twenty hours on that raft—we don't want a bath to-day! It began to blow this morning, and the water went right over us. She's a rare plucky one, too; never said a word, not when we sighted three ships running and couldn't speak them. Say, captain, you've got to help her. She's booked through to London, and marriage is the port. You'll do what you can, I know;

you are such good chaps, you sailors. We'll speak of it to-morrow."

So he went on, while Captain Tod sat upon the opposite bunk, and, swinging his short legs like a man who is very pleased with himself, took a good look at his guest and tried to sum him up.

"See here," said he at last, "that's all right. You are welcome aboard, and we'll do what we can; but my port's Charleston, and I guess that's not the road to London. Perhaps you'll begin by telling me who the girl is, and what flag she sails under. I must know that, sir, if I'm to help her."

Under other circumstances, perhaps, Murray would have hesitated to tell him much about Jessie; but he was scarcely master of himself to-day, and he spoke freely.

"She's Jessie Golding, the daughter of Golding, the railway king. You've heard of him, and perhaps of her. She's to marry young Lord Easstry, who cut capers in New York last Christmas; and she's to do it in fifteen days' time, if it can be done. We've all got to pull together and see her through. Perhaps you will speak a ship and transfer her. I know you will if you can—you are such good chaps. As for me, my port doesn't matter a red cent, but we must get the girl through, for she's counting on it."

Captain Tod watched him with half closed eyes, and ears which did not miss a word.

"Guess you are concerned, aren't you?" he observed shrewdly. "What's it all to do with you, sir? Are you a relative, cousin, or anything of that sort?"

"Oh," said Murray, "we chummed on the ship, and that's the whole of it. I never spoke a word to her until three days ago, and when she's married I don't suppose I shall ever speak another. We are in your hands now, you know. I'm sure a woman won't appeal to you in vain. She's a plucky little girl, one of the right sort. You do your best for her, and I'll see you don't lose by it."

Captain Tod screwed up his eyes still more, and tried to get hold of the tangled threads which troubled his brain.

"The old man would pay something, I suppose, if I got her through?"

"I'm sure he would; and what's more, I'll give you five hundred myself."

"That's a decent sum. Have you it with you?"

"If I hadn't, I shouldn't offer it. You just think it all over and tell me to-morrow. Man, I'm tired, dead tired—I simply must sleep."

Captain Tod took the hint and went toward the door, still thinking of the proposition. That Jessie Golding, the railway king's daughter, was aboard his ship was something to set a hundred wild ideas going in his head. Five hundred pounds by no means represented their imaginative value.

"Well," he said, "I'll think it over and see what's to be done. You just sleep; by the looks of you, you want it pretty badly."

He left the cabin, and Murray, rolling himself up in his blankets, slept for ten hours like a tired dog. When he awoke his body was all aglow in a gentle perspiration; and although he suffered from a sense of weakness and fatigue, his head was clear and his old manner had returned to him. He would have dressed, but for the fact that his clothes had been carried away by willing hands to the engine-room, to be dried. In default of them, he laid his head back upon the pillow, and tried to reckon up his situation.

His first exclamation was upon the folly that had led him to speak so freely to the captain.

"I deserve three months," he admitted self-reproachfully. "A child would have kept the story back. This man's a shark—I can read his eye. He was scheming all the time how to get money out of old Golding. I should have kept my mouth shut. Well, it can't be helped! What's the steamer, I wonder? Probably some old tramp. Well, I'll just wait. A man without clothes isn't good for much. I wonder how Jessie is. Yes, she's a rare plucky one!"

He sighed, and stretched out his hand for his watch, which some one had hung at the bunk's head.

"Honest, anyhow," he said to himself, and then he opened the little coin purse and counted the sovereigns. "Nothing gone there, either. I wonder if that little captain's a rogue."

The opening of his cabin door cut short this idle speculation, and he raised himself in his bed to see Fenton, the first officer, standing on the threshold a little apologetically.

"Come in, come in!" cried Murray cheerily. "It's good to see a face. You are the chief officer, I suppose."

Fenton came into the cabin and shut the door quietly.

"Yes, that's my berth," he said with some reticence. "I thought I'd just look in to see how you were doing."

"Slept like a top," said Murray brightly. "All my worldly wants are a

suit of clothes and a cup of coffee. Some of you, perhaps, will be able to oblige me."

Fenton came up to the bed, concealing something in his hand. His manner was a little awkward and embarrassed, and he appeared to choose his words with difficulty.

"I thought you'd be glad to have a talk with me," he began. "The captain's turned in, so we shan't be interrupted."

It was quite an ordinary remark, but Murray, long trained to shrewdness in his judgment of men, divined the situation instantly. This officer had come there to exchange confidences with him. Well, he was all ears.

"I am much obliged to you," he said frankly. "Men of that kind are better in their beds. So your port's Charleston, and we shan't be in the way of London-bound ships? I am sorry for that. I have promised Miss Golding to get her to London as soon as possible."

Fenton sat on the bunk just where Captain Tod had sat last night, and a doubting smile crossed his face.

"You are right to be sorry," he said slowly. "If it's getting to London that troubles you, you'll want it all. As to our port, well, Charleston sounds as well as anywhere else, I suppose."

"Do you mean to say that your port is not Charleston?"

"I do, sir. I mean that it's God knows where—God and the American navy."

Murray whistled and lay full length in his bed.

"In that case," said he, "we shall have to wait."

"You certainly will, unless you can persuade Captain Keen to put you ashore at Martinique."

"Then he touches at Martinique?"

"He has given me to understand so—when he was drunk."

"Ha, drink's the matter, is it?"

"It is, sir, and plenty of it. Keep the young lady out of his way when he's drunk. That's plainly put and honest Yorkshire."

Murray was silent for some time, but presently he said: "My name's West. What's yours?"

"Oh, just Jack Fenton, that's what they call me."

"Then, Jack, sir, I will borrow a suit of your clothes until my own are dried. Can you let me have them at once?"

"I will send them down right now. There's something else. We found this empty pocket-book in your jacket, and here's your revolver." He stood up and

put the pistol into Murray's hand. "Keep it loaded," he said with a nod. "You might want it."

## XII.

THE fresh breeze had blown itself out during the night, and the morning broke in radiant freshness, with a silvery-spraying sea, a cloudless sky, and the glory of the sunbeams on the water.

In crumpled, shrunken clothes, with an old woman's bonnet for a hat and a seaman's oilskin about her pretty shoulders, Jessie Golding was out on the deck at an early hour. Espying Murray by the wheel-house, she ran to him with both her arms extended and asked him to laugh with her.

"Isn't it glorious?" she said. "Look at me, Murray! Look at my bonnet, look at my fifty guinea Paquin!" And then, her laughter passing in a moment, a shadow crossed her face. "Have they any news? Is anything known of the others? Does the captain think they were saved? Oh, if one knew, if one only knew!"

He held both her hands for an instant, and then, linking his arm in hers, he fell to promenading the deck and trying to reassure her.

"We shan't know anything until we land, one side or the other. It would be impossible. I shall hope for the best until I know the worst, and you must do the same, Jessie. Now, wouldn't it be absurd to believe bad news until it is proved to be true? The ship went down on a calm night, and it is very likely that the tramp which sunk her stood by. I believe, at any rate, that the women were saved. Let's pray God it is so, and forget it. What I am thinking about is our own position. This ship's bound for Charleston—at least, they say so. It's a long way from London, and unless I can persuade the captain to transship us, you will be late after all. Well, I have done my best, admit it."

"A thousand times yes!" she answered him; and, seeming to reflect upon it for some while in silence, she asked him, a little wistfully: "Do you wish me in London so very much, Murray?"

"What makes you ask me that?" said Murray, not trusting himself to look at her.

"Why, you make me ask it. Ever since we left the ship, it's been nothing but London, London, London! I don't care about London very much just now. I don't care about anything except that I'm alive."

"Oh, of course, that's natural. The immediate is sometimes more absorbing than the future, but not often. You're so thankful to be aboard here that you don't think of anything else. I can quite understand; but I have a duty to perform toward you, nevertheless. For the present you are to regard me as friend, brother, father, if you like, and in that position I shall demand obedience."

"Oh, you will demand it?"

"Yes, and be obeyed. Admit that I am a determined person when I set my mind upon a thing. I see plainly that it is my duty to escort you to London, and there to put you into the hands either of your relatives or of Lord Eastry. I should prefer the former, but the latter will do."

"How contemptuously you speak of him!"

"Forgive me, I don't do any such thing. No man has the right to speak to a woman contemptuously of her fiancé—unless she provokes him. Monkton Castle, I believe, is a splendid place. You'll have a picture gallery as long as a race-track, and old masters enough to make the reputation of a city. You can't have everything, Jessie. If you feel yourself able to take up this great position, you are wise to do so—you are certainly clever enough to hold it, and the choice is your own. All that I insist is that you make the choice under circumstances which cannot influence you falsely—by which I mean that mere sentiment is to have no part in your decision, and that you shall be a perfectly free agent when you choose."

"Then you don't consider me a free agent here?"

"Far from it. My own lucky opportunities of serving you influence you, for one thing; you rate them altogether above their value. Then you are naturally excited by it all, and things are out of proportion. In London, among your friends, it will be different. I shall leave you there, and you will be free."

"You really mean to leave me?"

"I am quite resolved. It is the best course for both of us."

He felt the little arm quiver upon his own, and the pretty fingers which touched his hands almost in a caress were withdrawn. Murray would have given many years of his life could he have turned and taken the pitiful figure in his arms and whispered that protest of his love which all his iron will scarcely could restrain. But he was a man who, whatever his past had been, remained faithful

to the first teachings of a gentle chivalry toward women; and he would have accounted himself a rogue indeed had he used this opportunity to his own ends, or claimed an advantage of these very services which accident had made possible.

In London, he said to himself, it might be different. Jessie, it is true, would there be compelled to hear the reproaches of her friends, and that devilish philosophy which concerns itself with the celestial arrangement of marriages and the heavenly desire for settlements and diamonds. Perhaps even she would be unable to withstand the force of those circumstances, and would become Lord Eastry's wife. This thought dried up in an instant the well-spring of his new found happiness, and left him passionless and cold as marble. Life had not failed to teach him how to forget, though the lesson had been bitter enough.

And of what, we may ask, was Jessie thinking as they trod the decks together, while the ship plowed the gray-blue sea and her eyes were turned toward the cloudless horizon? She was wondering how she had conquered the reservation which attended all her intercourse with Murray since the first day she had been on board the Winona. Perhaps, in truth, she did not wholly know. Her sense of gratitude was supreme, and it blotted out all else. The mystery of his life in some sense fascinated her, and would have fascinated her altogether if she could have disassociated from her brother Lionel's death. But suspicion, when once invited, is induced to leave its human tenement reluctantly. It would thrust itself upon her with its whispered calumny: "Does he speak the truth—does he speak the truth?"

Had she known that Murray had been a party to that tragedy, even an impassive actor in it, she would never have spoken to him again. His persistent refusal to talk of Lionel's death both tortured and excited her. Why was he silent—whom was he shielding? These questions she could not answer; and when she could put them from her, then only did her heart go out to this strong will, and she would have submitted to it gladly. No other man had so influenced her, none caused her to think so deeply in hours so few. Had he told her but one page of his past, set her doubts forever at rest, she would have held out her arms to him without shame, have said "I love you!"

But his habit of mystery baffled her,

and she came at last to believe that the curtain would never be drawn back.

## XIII.

CAPTAIN KEEN found them together at the door of Jessie's cabin just before eight bells—his first appearance on deck that day; and when Jessie had him in to leave her wraps, he addressed Murray in his customary morning manner:

"Well, my man, and what are you hanging about here for?"

Murray turned as if a man had fired a pistol at him. He understood neither the question nor its meaning.

"Did you address me, sir?" he asked in his astonishment.

"I did so, sir. Are you engaged to this lady?"

Murray stepped back and looked the fellow up and down.

"You impertinent little hound!" he said, and then stopped for want of words.

Captain Tod took two steps toward him and raised his fist.

"Now, you march!" he said. "While that lady's on board this ship, you keep on the other side, do you hear me?"

"Yes," said Murray very quietly; "I hear you—and let me see, I know your face, captain. Yes, I've seen it before—now, where?" He put out his hand and gripped the little man by the arm, turning him round as if to see his face more clearly. "Oh, yes," he said, shaking his man until the captain's teeth chattered, "I've seen your face before, and now I know. It was in the St. Louis jail, three years ago last January. Shall I go on?"

Captain Tod strode off to the chart-house, raving like a lunatic. Fenton watched him there, loading his pistols; and he said to himself:

"There's not room for those two on this ship—not by a long way!"

But Murray saw no more of the captain that morning, nor did interest inspire him to make inquiries. He had already realized the danger of his situation, and it needed but this supreme touch of irony to cap the misfortunes of the unlucky voyage. He knew perfectly well that his life, if it were valued by Captain Keen, would not be worth an hour's purchase; and while he was well able to take care of himself, and had been in tight places too often to make over much of this one, his fears for Jessie were very real and harassing. As in a flash he understood their position—a ship making for an unknown port; arms its cargo; the Venezuelan insurgents its probable com-

missioners; ruffians of all kinds its crew, and a rogue for its skipper. The adventures of the *Ban Righ* were too fresh in his memory that he should make any mistake about the *Royal Scot*. She would run for any South American port that would serve her purpose, he imagined, and there hand over her cargo of arms to those who would pay a high price for the service.

Some acquaintance with the history and present condition of the neglected pastime of blockade-running led him to anticipate that the war-ships of three nations would sink the *Royal Scot* on sight. Should she escape them, General Castro, the President of Venezuela, would shoot her crew and enjoy the recreation. Nor would the insurgents themselves, with General Matos at their head, be less ready to dig graves for friends so embarrassing. It was easy to understand why such a low ruffian as Captain Keen found himself the master of this ragged-tailed crew, and even of Fenton, the one honest man among them. Murray liked Fenton from the first, and when that somewhat morose officer came to his cabin after lunch to smoke a cigar with him he offered him the welcome of one comrade to another.

"Mr. Fenton," said he, "I'll make no bones about the matter. You and I are in the same boat this voyage, and we are going to see each other through. Just sit down and make yourself as comfortable as you can. My cigars are all about five hundred fathoms down, so I can't offer you one; but I will borrow a pipe of your tobacco, if you will let me, and you can see to the grog. Sit right here and let's talk freely. From what I know, you may not be altogether displeased that I came aboard. I judge as much from what you said this morning."

Fenton sat on the bunk and pitched his cap upon the blankets beside him. He had already ordered the steward to bring them some coffee and old brandy, and when their pipes were lighted he asked after Jessie.

"I hope the young lady's better, sir. The right kind of young woman that—the right kind altogether. But I'm sorry she's on this ship, Mr. West, and I don't disguise it from you. There's not anything floating between New York and the Nore that I wouldn't sooner have hailed than the *Royal Scot*—I mean, if I'd been in your shoes."

A shadow of annoyance passed over Murray's face, and he lit his pipe somewhat impatiently.

"Yes, that's so," he said a little shortly; "a rogue of a ship and a drunken man in charge of her—not exactly a craft for a pretty woman to be hanging about. The question is, since we are here, what the devil are we going to do? I am one man against about thirty, and the odds are picturesque. You will stand by me, Mr. Fenton—I've counted on you from the first."

Fenton nodded his head; he was pleased that their talk should be quite frank.

"He's lifting his elbow in the chart-room now," he said, indicating Captain Tod. "What he might do against you when he's filled up I can't rightly say, but you must keep both eyes open. I told you as much this morning. He's a very dangerous man, is Tod Keen, and there isn't much law or order where he's going to. That's what I fear for the young lady, sir."

Murray blew a cloud of smoke into the air and followed it with his eyes as it floated upward. When he spoke again he showed how clearly he understood the danger.

"I'll tell you what, Fenton," he said. "I am going to buy this crew, if money can do it. That has been in my head since the start—the money to be paid in New York or London, according to opportunity. You say you've thirty aboard. Well, I'll spring one hundred pounds a man, which is three thousand pounds, sir, if you will tot it up. Now, that is a sensible offer. They stand by me, if it should come to it, and I pay them one hundred pounds a man as soon as opportunity allows. The rest is their own business; they may sink or swim, for all I care. I take it that you are just running blind, and that the first war-ship you see will drill holes in you. If that's so, the men should bite; but you are the best judge."

Fenton thought it over for a little while. This solution of the difficulty had not occurred to him, and he did not know quite what to say.

"It's a pretty tidy idea," he confessed at last, "but what security are you going to offer the men? Will they take your word? I think not. Five dollars on this ship would go further than a bond for five thousand; and remember you've got to reckon with the man himself. He won't wait your convenience, depend upon it, and a whisper of this would set the fireworks going. You must think of that before you speak the crew."

"Be sure I will; it's been in my mind all along. As for the money, I have ten thousand dollars in my clothes some-

where, and half of it shall go to the crew to-day. They must take my word for the rest—that or nothing. On their side, the promise either to transship me or to compel this man to touch at a West Indian port; on mine, one hundred pounds a man within three days of my being able to telegraph to London. I'll give you a bond for it now, and you shall witness it. It would hold in law, I think, and I believe the men will trust me. Try them, Fenton; we'll try them."

They discussed it at length, weighing the pros and cons and all the dangerous chances, and when Fenton had brought pens and ink and this odd document had been drawn up, they both signed it and asked themselves for the first time what should be done with it.

"If you give it to the crew," Fenton said, "he will flog it out of them. I can't carry it, for he will be on to me first. What are you going to do with it, Mr. West? We must know that."

Murray had thought of this, and the difficulty did not perplex him at all.

"I am going to put it, Fenton, where all the crew will know of it, but where he cannot touch it. Let me think of it until to-night. Just you go round and sound the men, or let that German carpenter do it. I will take care of Captain Keen."

Fenton went away to his watch much perplexed by such an odd commission; and Murray crossed the deck to Jessie's cabin to tell her that it was tea-time. She had slept through the long afternoon, and was the better for her sleep; nor had she any suspicion about the ship or its officers. A blind confidence in Murray answered all her questions. She did not believe that there was any difficulty which he could not surmount, and when Captain Tod addressed her with incoherent civilities, or passed Murray by without a word, she neither remarked it nor was conscious of affront.

Murray, meanwhile, began to perceive that the situation as between the captain and himself must be dealt with without any more delay, and he went to his cabin at ten o'clock that night more anxious, perhaps, than he had ever been in the whole course of his adventurous life.

It was ten o'clock, we say, when he turned in, after an ostentatious "Good night" to the captain, and nearly an hour later before his preparations were finished. Some instinct told him that the night would bring the first open declaration of hostilities. Although he had already made a hasty examination of his cabin when he first entered it, he now

examined it again, testing the bolts and sounding the panels, and bringing an old traveler's eye to bear upon it.

The lock of the door was good; he did not anticipate that it would be forced; but there was a little window giving upon the deck, which interested Murray greatly. This casement swung upon a bar, and when it stood in a horizontal position it left plenty of room for a hand to pass through. Murray measured the window carefully; and, having done so, he closed it, but did not bolt it.

The revolver which Fenton had returned to him was in his hip pocket. He now opened the chambers, and warmed the cartridges at the little oil lamp swinging from the ceiling. When he had satisfied himself that they were dry, he extinguished the flame and made himself a rude bed upon the floor. The conviction that his life would be attempted was too strong within him to permit carelessness; but his keen observation showed him that no bullet could touch him where he lay, and for two hours he slept the heavy sleep of a tired man.

When he awoke, the watch was being changed, and he could hear the voices of the officers getting the men up from below. Thoroughly awake, he stood up and shook himself. When the sound of rushing footsteps had died down, and the measured silence of the watch fell again, he slipped from his cabin, and, darting across the deck, concealed himself behind the engine-room cowl, from which place he watched the place he had left as a cat would watch a mouse-hole.

The night was wondrously fine, with a spreading heaven of mackerel cloud and a wan light of stars shining through the vistas. A fresh wind blew from a point south of west, and the ship rose and fell to the long swell with the cradle song of swishing seas and foaming bows dear to every sailor. There was no light in Jessie's cabin. As Murray thought of her asleep, of the part she had played in his life, remembering that another man waited for her in London, or, it might be, already said that she was dead, a great tenderness toward her filled his heart, and he wondered that he had not already claimed that supreme title to share such hours as these.

Murray was thinking of Jessie still when the shadow of a man fell suddenly upon the deck. He had looked for it, and he did not start or turn his head when the shadow moved across his face. This was the moment of which he had been so sure. He knew that it must come; perhaps he

welcomed it as a token of finality. There before him was the little drunken captain in whose power lay the lives and fortunes of so many. Murray observed that he wore a suit of oilskins, with a great sou'wester hat almost covering his face, and that he smoked a cigar apparently with great enjoyment.

For some time, indeed, Captain Tod Keen paced up and down the deserted deck, as if well pleased with himself and with his occupation. Once or twice he stopped to exchange a word with the aft lookout; but at last, becoming a little impatient, he sent the man upon some difficult errand below. Then he walked straight to Murray's cabin, and tried the little window with nervous fingers. Murray could scarcely repress a laugh while he watched this interesting operation.

It befell almost exactly as he had anticipated when he quitted the cabin. The little man, half mad with drink, opened the cabin window with fingers trained to stealth. Then, drawing a sheath knife from his belt, he inserted his bare arm through the opening and struck three savage blows at the bunk below. He withdrew his arm quickly, and listened for a long instant at the open window. The knife was still in his hand, his ear bent down, when Murray fired, and the bullet, skimming the captain's fingers, sent the weapon flying from his grasp and left it shining in a patch of moonlight at his feet.

He turned with the bark of a wounded hound, and, trying to find his revolver, roared drunken defiance at the darkness.

"You blasted Britisher, where are you? Hell, if I could see you, you——"

Murray did not wait for a second invitation. Covering the man with his pistol, he advanced boldly into the moonlight.

"You murdering little hound! Come, hands up—up with them! What, you won't? Then, by Heaven, it's your last chance!"

He fired a second shot with a hand as steady as steel. The bullet, skimming the drunken man's ear, sobered him in a moment. He held his hands straight up, and the blood from his wounded finger dropped upon his chalk-white face.

"Don't shoot, for God's sake!" he roared. "Is that what you want?"

"Pretty well," said Murray, with satisfaction; "but you need exercise, my man. Let's see you dance—come, lift 'em up! Now, then, let's see you waltz! One, two, three—you certainly will get shot in the toes! Ah, that's better!"

He lifted his pistol and fired two shots while he spoke, and Captain Keen, who had seen this amusement before in Jackson City, began sullenly to lift up his feet and to lurch about the deck like a wounded bear. There was no mistaking the meaning in that pair of eyes which fixed themselves upon him like the eyes of a hawk, and never for an instant ceased, as it were, to burn him with their steadfast gaze. Cursing until his lips frothed, the beads of a deathly perspiration upon his brow, he danced for dear life; and the watch below, wakened in its sleep, joined the watch above and formed a silent, well-satisfied ring about him.

Not a man there would have lifted a hand for Captain Keen's sake, had a rope been round his neck and the gallows raised. "Let the sot dance!" they said, and dance he did until, exhausted as much by fear as by loss of blood, he fell headlong into the scuppers. The men closed around him, and for the first time their tongues were loosed. Murray, however, answered no questions, but strode across the deck to Jessie's cabin and awoke her at the first knock.

"What is it?" she asked him. "What has happened, Murray?"

"A great deal. Please dress yourself and go straight up to the bridge. You'll find me there."

He did not linger another instant, but slipped up the bridge ladder and there met Fenton at the very door of the chart-room. What the chief officer had seen or heard, Murray never learned until the end. His demeanor was as impassive as ever.

"What's that, bo'sun? What's going on down there?"

"The captain's shot, sir—he's off in a dead faint. He don't speak a word."

"Carry him into the first cabin handy. That open door yonder will do—carry him in there."

"That's the passenger's, sir!"

A dozen voices chimed in to cry: "Aye, the passenger shot him;" but Fenton would not hear them.

"I'm coming down," he said. "Just bustle, some of you! What's it all about, what's happened?"

A Babel of voices arose to tell him the story; and while they contradicted one another and shouted and wrangled as seamen will, Fenton seized the opportunity to whisper a word to Murray:

"Get into the chart-room—I'll send the lady up. You were very foolish, Mr. West!"

"Premature, if you like—not foolish. I suppose we'll have this lot against us

sooner or later. Well, it can't be helped. Here's Miss Golding—I'm glad of that!"

Jessie came up the ladder at the words, and it was plain that she had both heard and witnessed the amazing scene on the deck below. Her hasty toilet betrayed her agitation, and her pretty flaxen hair was half wild about her shoulders.

"What is it, Murray?" she asked quickly. "What has happened to Captain Keen? Why did you send for me?"

Murray knew that this was the time to tell her all, for the truth was no longer to be kept, and he must hold her henceforth at his side.

"The matter's this," he said shortly. "Captain Keen is a murderer, and I've done him an injustice by keeping him alive. He tried to stab me in my cabin; well, he didn't succeed, and here we are. It's a tight place, Jessie, and you must obey my orders. I want you to go into that chart-room and not to come out until I give you leave. I think it necessary, or I wouldn't ask you."

Jessie lifted her astonished eyes, and for an instant he caught a silhouette of her girlish face; the high white forehead with the flaxen curls about it, the well-shaped, tiny ears, the firm chin, and the dimpled cheeks. She was pale, but quite silent. Never for one instant had she imagined that a woman could be in peril upon a British ship.

"Murray, what are you saying? He tried to kill you—Captain Keen? No, it's too terrible!"

"Possibly, but quite true. Anyway, he didn't succeed, and that's what I'm concerned about. Go into the chart-room, Jessie, and wait for me. I want to talk to the crew. If we can square them, it's all right. I don't think it will be difficult, but you mustn't be here when I do it, that's all."

She went into the cabin without another word. Murray strode to the end of the bridge and peered down upon the deck. He could hear Fenton's voice and that of the Irish bo'sun, who was talking loudly and with passion; but the others remained in a sullen group about the door of the cabin into which the captain had been carried. Kelly, the second officer, was among them, and he now came up to the bridge, pipe in his mouth; and with an abrupt word to Murray he took over the watch.

"Mr. Fenton says the captain isn't hurt, sir. Is that so?"

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Murray. "He tried to murder me."

Kelly whistled, and then gave the course

to the quartermaster who was at the wheel. The crew meanwhile strolled up to the ladder's foot one by one, and, taking advantage of the opportunity, Murray addressed them.

"Lads," he said, "I want you to witness that to-night's trouble isn't any work of mine. Your skipper tried to murder me in my bunk. I don't know what I've done to him, and I don't much care; but if you help him, you'll hang, and that's plain truth. You stand by me, and there's a hundred pounds a man for you at Lloyd's, in London or New York, as you wish it. If you want the other thing—well and good; but I'm thinking that you're sensible fellows who'll stand by a shipmate and not risk your lives for a gang of cutthroats who'll let you sink or swim when this cargo's run. Just think it over, my lads; there's plenty of time. You may come and tell me in the morning if you'll take that money or leave it. That's all I've got to say—except this, that if your steward will step up the ladder and take an order of mine, I'll give him a five-pound note."

They heard him in silence, their pipes glowing in the darkness and their hands in their pockets. As they had come, so they went, man by man to their bunks, leaving but the lookouts and the quartermaster on the moonlit deck. Murray thought at first that the steward would not respond to the bribe; but when some minutes had passed, that worthy came a little shamefacedly up the ladder. Fenton was at his heels to keep him going.

"Did you send for me, sir?"

"Yes," said Murray bruskiy. "Look at that. Do you know what it is, my man?"

"Guess it's a hundred dollar bill, sir."

"Nothing less. Now, see here, what I want is food and drink—coffee, canned beef, biscuit, water, and a spirit stove and kettle. If you'll throw in three bottles of whisky, I'll add twenty-five dollars."

"I've no orders from the captain, sir."

"The captain is drunk, sir—Mr. Fenton will give you the orders."

"Is that so, Mr. Fenton?"

Fenton, driven this way and that, said curtly, "Yes, that's so," and the man went down the ladder like lightning. Ten minutes had not passed before the provisions were heaped up on the chart-room table and the money had passed.

"That will do," said Murray quietly. "You will now attend to Captain Keen. Let me know when he is sober and I'll pay another twenty-five dollars. Is that your price?"

Fenton said, "Too much," under his

breath. When the man was gone, he sat upon the bunk and wiped the sweat from his face. A poor oil-lamp lit up the chart-room dimly; Jessie, half believing, half incredulous, sat in Captain Keen's own chair at the table whereon the chart of the course was laid, while Murray stood at the door, as if afraid to leave the bridge for an instant.

"Fenton," he said dryly, "we'll just have to see this thing out. Which way are the men going? You should know that."

Fenton was equally laconic.

"Against you," he replied, with no more apparent interest than an intimation of breakfast would have caused him. "They're going against you, Mr. West."

"Right. Then it's watch and watch about. Don't you fear any consequences, Fenton; I'll see to those. This ship's breaking the law every knot, and when Captain Keen goes to a court of justice, we'll have a pleasure party. You look after Miss Golding. We men can take the other cabin, and this shall be hers."

He appealed to Jessie, asking her if she would sleep; but she shook her head and told him to leave her out of his calculations.

"They won't hurt me, surely, Murray. It's of you I'm thinking."

"Then don't think of me. We're all right until morning, and a sober man will be easier to deal with. There'll be no attack to-night."

She would have answered him, but while he was still speaking Fenton sprang up and, gripping Murray's arm, pointed to the bridge.

"Look out!" he said. "The ladder!"

Murray turned as a shadow fell upon the boards, and, running out, he met Captain Keen face to face.

#### XIV.

CAPTAIN KEEN was almost at the ladder's head when Fenton gave the alarm, and there followed at his heels the more honorable cutthroats of the Royal Scot—a heterogeneous medley of Germans, negroes, and even Chinese, whom money had attracted to his ambiguous flag.

These men, it may be, but half understood the bribe which had been offered to them, or, understanding it, they doubted that it was anything but a lure to trap them. Faithful for the moment to the man who had hired them, their fidelity was partly the seaman's tradition, partly the belief that Tod Keen would recover his ship and make them pay a heavy price

for their defection. They hung together resolutely, while they asked who the stranger might be that he should strut the bridge like any flag admiral; and no sooner was Keen on his legs again than they drew their knives and followed him headlong to the ladder's foot.

Their ardor was its own enemy, for they shuffled heavily upon the deck, and Fenton's quick ear detected them. Murray faced the danger in a single stride. He had taken his pistol from the table as he ran out, and his first exclamation was a bitter one upon the folly which had led him to waste good cartridges in mere callisthenic exercises. But one barrel of the six remained loaded, and while he cried back to Fenton to pass him another revolver he fired point blank at the mass of men upon the ladder, and saw one go down in the very middle of the press.

The bullets which answered him sang wildly above his head, shivering the skylight of the chart-room and even drilling the great funnel behind it; but for these Murray had been ready, and, stooping swiftly as he came out, he locked his arms in Captain Keen's. In that terrible embrace he blocked the ladder's head and kept the bridge clear. Not a shot could be fired now from the deck below, nor could any pass up the ladder; while those who clutched frantically at the railing of the bridge, or hung to the bars with iron fingers, were sent down again headlong by Fenton and the second officer at his side.

From that moment officers and crew stood back to await the issue of as odd a duel as ever a ship's deck witnessed. Shoulder to shoulder, almost lip to lip, the two men wrestled and fought for life itself; their chests heaving, their bones bending, every muscle taut in that dread embrace. Even Murray's strength could not free him from the cat-like claws of this insane drunkard who clung to him and would have dragged him down with a maniac's hand; while the maddened crew at the ladder's foot raved impotently and even tried to strike at Murray over their captain's body.

"Fetch him down, captain!"

"Pull him round, skipper, and let me knife him! Use your knees!"

"Throw him down to us, captain—we're ready enough!"

A great negro, drawing a knife from its sheath, passed under the ladder unobserved and began to pull himself up beneath the captain's very feet. Neither Fenton nor Murray discovered this new danger; but Jessie at the cabin door, wild with fear, and silent until that time in her

black disbelief that these things could be, caught sight of the face as it rose above the highest rung, and her sharp scream drew Murray's attention. He, too, saw the danger now, and as the negro gained the bridge and lifted his knife to strike, he swung the captain's body in his arms, and the blade buried itself to the hilt in the man's flesh. In the same moment, and before any one could move a hand against him, Murray struck the negro full in the face with the butt end of his revolver. The sailor raised his arms with a low moan, and fell back insensible to the deck below.

The swift strategem, unexpected and wholly successful, deprived the crew for an instant of any certain idea and left them still and gaping. While some below shouted to those above to go up and have done with it, the men on the topmost rungs became suddenly aware that they were looking down the barrel of a pistol. Drawing back from that with warning cries, they turned presently upon their fellows, and in the darkness they all went roaring and fighting upon the deck like a very pack of maddened wolves. Never was sweeter music heard by those upon the bridge than this fierce outburst of beast-like sounds, now ferocious, now snarling, now loud, in the agony of wounds; and to it presently was added the harmony of revolver shots and the commanding voice of Fenton as he stood by the binnacle and tried to resume his old authority.

"Drop those knives!" he roared. "You nigger there, drop it, I say! Every man to his place. Sharp—the word—I'm coming down among you!"

He sent a bullet skimming over their heads, and this, chancing to strike a ventilator, rung from it a bell-like note which drove every man, as at a signal, plump down upon the deck. There they lay hidden by the shadows, negro and Chinaman, German and Swede, side by side in that sudden truce of fear and recollection. The captain was dead—they knew it now; and, beginning to perceive that Fenton would take up the command against them, they fell into this sullen silence, as of men robbed suddenly of their resolution.

In the chart-room, meanwhile, Murray, black with powder and bearing twenty wounds, sat exhausted on the bunk and permitted Jessie to do with him what she would. He was talking a little wildly again, and she knew that the night had unnerved him.

"It's nothing at all; why are you so persistent, Jessie? Yes, that fellow had

claws like a cat, the murdering little hound! But I don't think he's hurt me. Don't you go to the door, I won't allow it! Well, if you will coddle me, I suppose I must submit. Wasn't it lucky that Fenton heard them coming? Another ten seconds and we should have had peas in our soup. No, they won't try again—not to-night, anyway. The captain's dead, you see. Yes, it's a little painful, but not much."

She had bared his arm by this time, and cut away the linen above the elbow. No wild animal could have left uglier wounds than the dead man had inflicted upon him, and while every touch of her gentle fingers gave him exquisite pain, he did not flinch or withdraw his arm.

"You are a splendid nurse, Jessie," he kept on saying. "If ever you want a career, there's one for you. Why, you are born to it—oh, that's sharp!—you have a touch like velvet and the fingers of a child. When you want a testimonial, come to me. What, cutting up the tablecloth?"

Jessie, on her part, scarcely spoke a word. She was sick with fear, but the woman's will pushed fear aside, and every word she spoke was one of pity.

"Oh, dear Murray, oh, if I only had some linen! What shall I do? Now, please—it must be painful, it must be dreadful! Oh, I am so clumsy! Please try to bear it."

She used to say afterwards that but for Murray's hurt she would not have lived through the night. It had all been so sudden, such a revelation of things not understood, that even now she had but the vaguest touch with reality; and there was no instant when the scene she had witnessed permitted her to forget it, or to say that it could not be repeated. The horrid faces, the gleaming knives, were before her while she worked; she heard again the report of pistols and the shivering of broken glass; and her eyes turned constantly to the cabin door, as if to see again the figure of the shadows.

Fenton came into the cabin while the bandages were being tied. Hesitating no longer to speak before Jessie, he frankly told them what he thought of it.

"They're cowed for the minute, but it won't be for long," he said. "What's to come of it, God knows, Mr. West! Here we are, three against twenty-seven, and two hundred miles from any port. I tell you I was never in a tighter place in all my life; and I'd give something if any one would show me the way out."

"Begin by offering me a glass of water, Fenton. I'm as thirsty as a camel."

Fenton and Jessie brought the water together, and when Murray had drunk it he asked a question.

"Is Kelly with us, then?"

"At present, certainly. You can trust him about two minutes."

"I'll have to talk to him. He doesn't want to hang, I suppose? Are there any others you can count upon?"

"Old Joe, the carpenter, may come in, and Watson, the boy; the engineers go neutral—they're keeping below."

"The best place for them! So we're five against twenty-five—that's better. We must take watch and watch about, Fenton—I'll take first, if you like; the fresh air will do me good."

Jessie exchanged quick glances with Fenton, and then surprised them both by chiming in.

"Mr. Fenton," she said, "I want you to think I'm a man."

"I wish I could, miss."

"But you must, to-night. Mr. West shall sleep, and you're as tired as he is. Now, I shall stand at the cabin door for just two hours. Can't a woman scream if she tries? Well, I can; and I shall, if I see any one."

They laughed at her, protesting that it was impossible; but Jessie persisted obstinately, and, utterly routed at last, the two men made a pretense of going to their bunks and lying down while Jessie went out on the bridge and took up her stand by the binnacle. Kelly, the second officer, watched her with an admiration he did not attempt to conceal.

"Say," he asked, "are you an American girl?"

"Why, yes; I believe I'm that, Mr. Kelly."

"Wish I'd known it. You can count on me thick and thin, Miss Golding. I thought you were a Britisher."

"Well, I'm not, so you can change your opinion. Where are the men? What are they doing now?"

"Waking Tod Keen, I reckon. Your friend settled the skipper, you know. He must have legs like steel, the way he lifted old Keen up and held him like a fire-screen while the nigger slashed him. He's a good chum! I'm on your side now, down to my heels."

"Do you think they will attack us again?"

"Not to-night—that's certain. What they'll do to-morrow the Lord only knows; I wouldn't give ten cents for my chance."

*(To be continued.)*

# Harding's Home-Coming.

THE STORY OF A MAN WHO FAILED AND A WOMAN WHO LOVED HIM.

BY ADA WOODRUFF ANDERSON.

HARDING'S steps faltered and stopped. He had come to that last mile on the home trail. To the left the near ruffles of the Dosewallips thundered a familiar chord; and it was here, where the track doubled this cedar trunk, that when he started to join the Alaska gold rush, nearly two and a half years ago, he had said good-by to his wife. She had stood just here at the turn, little Dorothy clinging to the skirt of her blue cotton gown; all her lovely figure outlined against the stems of the budding maples. He could never forget.

"It's all right, Paul," she had said, steadying the break in her voice. "It's all right. We must look forward to the home-coming!"

A hand seemed to tighten on Harding's throat. His shoulders heaved. He threw down his miner's pack, dwindled to little more than a faded blue blanket, and, sinking upon it, leaned on the cedar.

"Oh, my God!" he said. "My God! How she built her faith on me, and I'm dragging myself back like any beaten cur."

Presently he raised his right hand absently, with a gesture of habit, to his breast pocket, but he started and dropped it back suddenly to his knee. It was only a dismembered stump, bound still in thick bandages. The fingers had been frozen one unspeakable day on a far Alaska trail. They had finally been amputated by the surgeon on the United States transport that brought seven hundred destitute miners down to Seattle from Nome.

He looked at the hand disgustedly, a growing misery in his young eyes. Lines, the scars of defeat, deepened at the corners of his mouth. Presently he raised his left hand to the pocket and drew forth a letter, worn, stained, blurred by exposure. The date was gone, but he knew that it was written just a year ago. Helena must have sent others since, but he had been out of the track of mails, and lately had moved continually, making his way slowly from the Alaska interior to the coast. This was the last letter he had received, and its first and final sheets were missing, left in the spring blizzard on that distant, silent trail where it had all been so nearly

over with him. The men who had discovered and rescued him had given him these fragments of paper, which they had taken from his stiffened fingers. More than once, in the months that followed, the sight of them had buoyed him through bottomless sloughs of despair.

A shaft of sunlight, slanting between the tops of the firs, illumined the open page. His glance moved slowly, though he knew every word, lingering on the nicely rounded characters, reading between the lines.

It all commenced with two young Seattle business men who were taking their outing on the Dosewallips. They were tenting from place to place and boarding where they could at near farms. But they had their best fishing here, at the pool below the big falls, and they liked my way of serving trout very well. They stayed on and on, telling me I had done them a favor by taking them in, though they paid me generously, and one of them, Mr. Armstrong, helped me in countless ways. Dorothy grew very fond of him. He is something of a scholar, though not a college man like you, and it was pleasant to be brought in touch with the outside world again. So in the spring I shall open "The Sportsman's Retreat"—doesn't it sound inviting?—and they are going to advertise it among their friends, and are coming for a long stay again in the fishing season.

It is your way, dear, to brave it out in the face of certain defeat. I waken in the night-time thinking of it. I see you spending yourself, ill, perhaps neglected, until, if I could only be sure of finding you, I would go to you. I know you have done your best; no man could do more. And if it is failure, Paul dear, I shall not care. Only—come home!

A drop of moisture fell, blistering that written "failure." She had not yet seen him. It was only then that she could feel the full force of his defeat. Still, it was true he had done his best; had braved it out against frightful odds. He would be braving it out now but for this useless hand. He had learned what it meant to work side by side with men long accustomed to manual labor, to keep pace with the stoutest, digging the frozen earth, while his clothing alternately thawed, dripped with sweat, and congealed. He had learned what it meant, after months of suspense, to find his toil of little account, his claim next to worthless, while hardly a stone's throw away other men panned out their thousands. He had