

# A DAUGHTER OF STORMS

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ETHERIDGE wrote a letter to Miss Demerest by the light of a candle in his bedroom.

"Dearest Cicely," he began, "at last I have found lodgings in a farmhouse about a mile along Flint Mountain from the new reservoir dam. Zenas Middleton is my landlord—a prosperous Yankee with a wife who looks, oddly enough, like a Swede or a Dane, and a daughter whom I haven't seen yet. Our dam goes on according to schedule, and my share in the supervision of it will be finished in a fortnight. Then I am promising myself a day or two with you before I am sent West on the canal job. When will our waiting be over, my dainty flower? How did a delicate bit of fairyland like you ever chance to care for a hulking human machine like me?"

"This New Hampshire hilltop is a bleak wilderness. While I am here in my attic room, listening for the supper-bell, the wind blows the rain against the shingles so that it sounds like the surf at Nantucket which you detested so much. Good night, Titania, and——"

Some one knocked at the door.

"Tea's ready," said a dull voice from the threshold.

The young engineer looked up from his table. He thanked his landlord's daughter and chuckled at the heavy, clumping footfall as she descended the stairs. Then he finished his letter.

"Mlle. Middleton has just appeared," he wrote. "Weight, one hundred and sixty pounds; height, five feet and nine inches; a blonde bruiser. You needn't be jealous. As ever, Lucas."

After supper, while the two women washed the dishes, Etheridge and Middleton sat smoking by the open door of the generous, pleasant kitchen. The

rain was unabated, but the strong easterly wind blew it away from the door.

"Up-stairs in my room," said Etheridge, "the noise on the roof made me think of the seashore."

The girl turned abruptly toward him, clasping a plate in the tight grip of her masculine hands.

"Of the sea?" she drawled. "Yes, I thought so, too."

"Come, Thora!" called her mother sharply. "Don't dawdle!"

At the tea-table Etheridge had not particularly regarded Thora, but now a momentary glimmer in her childish eyes arrested his attention. The impression which the girl made upon him was that of a docile animal. There was no life in her square face. She was well, if too strongly, featured, but her tightly rolled, lusterless yellow hair and the weary, submissive droop of her broad shoulders emphasized the picture of a typical farm woman overworked before her time. She resumed her task mechanically, and old Middleton sucked at his corn-cob pipe.

"We can't none of us say as to the noise of the seashore, Mr. Etheridge," he remarked affably. "None of us has been nigher to it than this farm—'cept mother, of course. Her kin followed the sea, but me and Thora was never in sight nor hearin' of it."

Etheridge went early to bed, although the following day was Sunday. His chamber was the only room on the attic floor. As he lifted his latch he heard a board creak complainingly behind him in the gloomy cavern of the garret.

"Anybody there?" he demanded, shading his lamp.

Thora advanced in the wavering circle of light.

"I came up here to listen," she said, "but it has died down. When it rains again I mean to get closer under the roof and listen. Good night." She descended a few steps down the stairs. "Is there any sound like that," she asked, "in the open sea?"

"Why, no," said Etheridge, puzzled. "There's no surf in the open sea."

"What kind of sound does it make out there, then?"

"I don't believe I could describe it very well, Miss Middleton, to one who doesn't know what the sea is like."

"I suppose not," Thora said, nodding gravely. "Good night;" and she vanished down the blackness of the stairwell.

## II

ETHERIDGE spent Sunday morning over the blue prints on his table. When he had finished, he encountered Thora Middleton on the steps of the farmhouse. Her sleeves were rolled up over her graceful, rounded forearms, and she wore a man's cap, pulled not unbecomingly over her yellow hair.

"You don't seem to be bound for church," observed Etheridge. "Neither am I. I'm going to measure some stonework at the dam before dinner."

"Well, I'm going for a row on the pond," said Thora. "You didn't know I had a boat on the reservoir, did you?" She questioned him with her placid eyes. "I'll row you down to the dam if you wish," she proposed shyly.

"All right," agreed Etheridge.

He was a young man who did not like to be puzzled, and this girl puzzled him persistently. She led the way to the pond. It was a gusty morning after the rain, and the sky was dotted with drifting feathers of clouds. The flattened top of the hill stretched for perhaps half a mile, bared of trees save for dwarfed pines. Flint Mountain was the highest of the range, and the horizon was as straight as that on a Western prairie. A distant red barn stuck up against the sky like a fisherman's cottage on a sandy coast.

"You wouldn't think we were on a mountain, would you?" Thora said. "You'd hardly guess there was any land at all over yonder."

"That's so—we might be on an island," Etheridge suggested.

"Except we can't smell the salt, and except that the wind would be steadier. Out in the middle of the lake it will blow steadier, anyhow. We don't get many such lively mornings like this in summer. My boat is pulled up beyond those bushes."

They launched the clumsy skiff, and Etheridge examined the unpainted, box-like affair somewhat dubiously.

"Not very new, eh?" he commented.

"I've had it for a long time," said Thora, with frank pride. "Isn't it a fine boat? I don't know what I'd do without it." She stooped to adjust the oars, and rubbed her hand along the gunwale with a gesture that was almost a caress. "Get in, please, and I'll push off."

"Shan't I——"

"No, I'm going to row," insisted Thora, looking eagerly at some miniature whitecaps. "It will be splendid out there among the waves."

"Waves?" said Etheridge, laughing. "What, those ripples?"

She was facing him, and he noticed that her lips straightened wistfully.

"Maybe they are only ripples compared to real water," she said. "I call them waves. Sometimes they splash up so as to wet you." Her stroke was free and manly in spite of the awkward oars and fittings. "Have you been in boats much, Mr. Etheridge?" she continued.

"I helped build a lighthouse once," replied Etheridge. "The boating at Thunder Inlet was not so pleasant as this. It was hardly safe at times."

"But in a good boat like mine, so"—Thora paused, as if afraid to use an unfamiliar word—"so seaworthy," she said.

Etheridge laughed again.

"Why, Miss Middleton," he exclaimed, "this plaything couldn't last a minute in a capful of wind on salt water."

One of the oars jammed suddenly, and she turned sideways to release it. Etheridge, with a qualm of self-reproach, saw that he had hurt her, although she smiled bravely and tugged at the oars with redoubled vim.

"I'm afraid you don't understand

how savage Thunder Inlet can be," he said kindly. "Most people who have never seen the ocean fancy it is always blue and lovely, but——"

"It isn't blue," interrupted Thora. "I know the color of the sea in a storm. Look!" She pointed to a patch of pine-trees. "A sort of greenish black—a hungry color, I call it. And the foam when the waves break isn't white, as it is here, but—well, like old snow. And it hisses."

"I dare say your mother has described it to you," said Etheridge, rather startled.

"My mother will tell me nothing about the sea," sighed Thora. "I have never heard her speak of it. All her brothers were drowned on the Banks. Do you know where the Banks are, Mr. Etheridge?"

As she paddled along the narrowing lake, Etheridge talked to her of the Banks and of their dangers. He described a gale which he had witnessed from a Cunarder's deck off the Irish coast, and he told the story of the Samoa hurricane as he had heard it from an old sergeant of marines. Thora leaned forward, holding her chin in her hands, while the boat drifted with the current.

They grounded the boat and followed a path to the dam. Etheridge tried to explain the different features of the work, but Thora did not seem to understand, and responded with listless monosyllables. Piqued a trifle by his inability to interest her in a thing that was so interesting to him, Etheridge guided his companion to the top of the dam and pointed at the view of the valley, which opened out over the course of a mountain stream. The peaceful landscape was softened by the mantle of September haze.

"It's like a picture in a fairy book, isn't it?" he said.

"How should I know?" said Thora sullenly. "All I know is that I am sick of it. I hate it!" She mounted a higher stone. "Will the water ever run over here where we are standing?"

"I hope not," Etheridge answered. "If it does, our firm will be minus some reputation—look out!"

The girl, leaning forward, had lost her balance. Etheridge jumped up be-

side her on the insecure pinnacle of the rock. The impetus of his spring tilted the stone ever so slightly, but enough to jeopardize their footing. Beneath them was a sheer fall of twenty yards into the oozy slime. Etheridge slipped; his knee cracked against the jagged edge, and his wits floated away from him in a mist of pain. Thora caught his forearm, bracing backward.

"All right!" she said.

But their plight belied her words. She had nothing to cling to. Etheridge was a heavy man, and his dead weight was pulling her with him.

"Let go!" he gasped, fighting white-lipped against dizziness.

"All right!" repeated Thora.

She flung herself breast down on the boulder, and anchored her knees about it so that she was astride. Etheridge's left leg dangled helplessly, but he managed to dig his other foot into a crevice. Thora raised him, inch by inch. They were both breathless, and after Etheridge was out of danger neither of them spoke for nearly a minute.

"Can you walk?" at length asked Thora.

"I can try," said Etheridge, and felt his knee-cap gingerly. "Must have torn a sinew," he reported. "Bone seems to be all there. No, you needn't lift me. You've done enough"; and he groaned in masculine disgust at his physical dependence on a woman.

"I'd have done more than that," Thora said simply.

"Well, I owe you a great deal," mumbled Etheridge.

He was afraid to say more, and he tried to rise. Thora supported his elbow in the crook of her arm. The injury was not very severe, after all, and Etheridge was able to limp to the landing-place. She rowed him across the glassy lake and helped him to hobble ashore.

"It's been of some use," she asserted. "It's not altogether a—a plaything."

"Oh, you mean the boat!" said Etheridge. "Yes, it's been of use to-day, certainly. And I can never thank you enough, or in——"

He was about to add "in the right way," when he checked himself. Nevertheless, this was the thought uppermost in his mind—that even a man of grace-

ful speech could not have hit upon the apt phrase of gratitude for this girl.

### III

His stiffened knee housed Etheridge only for three or four days. Mrs. Middleton took good care of him, and he amused himself by composing for Cicely a semi-burlesque account of his misadventure. He received an answer from his *fiancée*, written in a similar vein, but the concluding paragraph made him think.

"Of course," wrote Cicely, "the Amazonian damsel is wildly in love with you. You say that you haven't been able to thank her. Well, Lucas, the best way for you to show your gratitude would be to leave your quarters in the farmhouse and keep yourself secluded among your Italians until it is time for you to quit that romantic mountain forever."

Etheridge smoothed the letter on the arm of his rocking-chair and gazed moodily out of the kitchen window at Thora, who was picking flowers in the old-fashioned garden. Mrs. Middleton was fond of sweet peas, and her daughter made it her duty to gather them, but with an indifference which was comic, tearing at the stems without seeming to notice what sort of blossoms they bore, if, indeed, they bore any blossoms at all.

He read again Cicely's final paragraph. Etheridge was a wholesome-minded young man. He did not propose to speculate whether Cicely had hit upon the truth or no, and much less was he inclined to experiment with the situation. He had interested Thora strangely with stories of the sea. A lonely farm girl in a New England solitude would be interested naturally and inevitably in anybody who could tell her things she liked to hear. So he dismissed the matter from his attention, and next day he resumed work at the dam.

Etheridge saw little of Thora after that. He spent the evenings at his table with his plans. On Sunday he drove to the village to interview some local contractors. Later in the week his strapped valise was ready on Mr. Middleton's front steps. A brisk wind swept over the hilltop.

"Good-by, Mrs. Middleton," said

Etheridge, climbing into the buckboard. "Good-by, Zenas. I won't forget your hospitality, and—where's Thora?"

"I guess Thora's on the lake," replied the farmer's wife. "She wouldn't miss weather like this."

"Tell her good-by for me. It's a breezy day for boating."

"I'd ought to smash up that boat for kindling," grumbled Middleton, "but nothing's happened to Thora yet in it."

"You must see that nothing ever does happen to her," concluded Etheridge cordially. "I wouldn't like to hear of trouble coming to anybody who'd saved my life, or the next thing to it. If a way should turn up by which I can repay her goodness and yours, you'll let me know, won't you?"

### IV

THE Western canal and a government levee on the lower Mississippi consumed Etheridge's winter. He sandwiched in a brief visit to Cicely. A visit of four days, he afterward assured himself, could hardly have been otherwise than unsatisfactory. Miss Demerest spent most of her winter in Florida and Egypt. She had many friends. The beginning of May found Etheridge on the northerly coast of Massachusetts, building a breakwater at Buryhead.

One morning he received a letter from Zenas Middleton, which had been forwarded from his firm's office.

"You instructed me that I needn't balk at asking a favor," wrote Zenas. "Mother has been sickly, and the doctor says how she needs sea air. I thought you might know of a handy place on the shore where mother could board for a spell. She wouldn't want anything high-toned. She'll be there about a month, leaving me and Thora to tend farm."

Etheridge answered immediately, advising Mrs. Middleton to come to Buryhead, which was not more than a day's journey from Flint Mountain. He could secure quarters for her in the modest hotel where he was staying. The landlady would take excellent care of her. Etheridge had not forgotten, nor did he intend to forget, the kindness of the Middletons when he was crippled; and he was genuinely glad to do them a service. He would have told Miss Dem-

erest about it had she not been yachting with the Gorhams in their schooner, the *Cleopatra*, and temporarily out of reach of correspondence. On the day appointed for the invalid's arrival Etheridge left his work and drove a mile inland to the Buryhead station. He saw two feminine figures instead of one waiting for him on the platform.

"Yes, Thora came along too, at the last minute," explained Mrs. Middleton. "Zenas reckoned it would be safer. He's silly, the way he worries over me!"

Thora's speech did not extend beyond the formalities. She sat beside the driver, and kept her back uncompromisingly turned toward her mother and Etheridge on the rear seat. From a rise of ground near the railroad they had their first glimpse of the ocean, stretching off to meet the sky, and motionless as a sheet of burnished steel. Etheridge noted a nervous tremor in Mrs. Middleton's eyes as she watched her daughter. Thora did not move. She did not speak until they had dismounted and her mother was making friends with the ample widow who presided over the little hotel on the harbor front.

"My boat could weather that!" said Thora, waving her hand at the after-noon glint of the lifeless sea.

She was paler than usual, Etheridge thought. When he returned for supper the table had been cleared of all plates except his own. On the porch he stumbled against Thora. The night was still and breathless, and the harbor was without a sound except that from far out in the darkness came the faint rattle of an anchor-chain.

"That's funny," commented Etheridge. "I saw no vessel come around the point before sundown. Did you?"

"No," said Thora. "I think she's just sailed in. There's a ship's light out there. Perhaps she's getting out of the way of the storm."

"What storm?"

"There ought to be a storm pretty soon," the girl said quietly.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," laughed Etheridge. "There's no more chance of a wind than there would be of thunder on Christmas."

He joined the loungers on the long wharf, and gossiped with Captain Bun-

ker, an ancient salt for whom he had a liking. While they were discussing the strange arrival in the harbor, an electric launch nosed its path through the shadow to the landing-stage and a yacht steward climbed up the steps.

"By nation, it's just as well ye put in!" said old Bunker to the sailor on the launch. "It's going for to blow come morning. What vessel, mate?"

"Schooner yacht *Cleopatra*, out of Boston," the sailor answered.

"Mr. Gorham's?" demanded Etheridge incredulously.

He scrawled a note to Cicely by the glare of the launch's stern light, promising to visit her the next forenoon if the *Cleopatra* was in port. When he went back to the hotel, Thora was still on the veranda, leaning listlessly against a narrow pillar. The night had thickened, and the harbor moaned softly and timidly, as if with a newly found voice.

"What in the world put the notion of a storm in your mind?" asked Etheridge.

"Oh, I don't know," she said slowly. "I sort of felt it. Sometimes you feel things you can't talk about. You're sorry I came with mother, aren't you?"

"Good heavens, no!" blurted Etheridge in bewilderment. "Why should I be?"

## V

A BANGING blind roused Etheridge at dawn, and he sprang to the window anxiously. There did not seem to be much wind. The morning, indeed, was foggy, and the off-shore breeze blew clouds of coppery mist intermittently toward the harbor. Etheridge tossed on his oilskins and hurried out to the half-finished breakwater. Haynes, his foreman, was there before him.

From the extremity of the stonework Etheridge could make out that the gale blew stronger beyond Topsail Point, piling up great waves in the open sea. He left Haynes on guard at the breakwater with a dozen laborers, and outlined every precaution.

After an hour or so, Etheridge tramped for the village. He could not escape a certain apprehension. Of course it was highly improbable that anything could happen to a vessel of the



rating and equipment of the Cleopatra—and yet, Cicely was Cicely.

He determined to carry out his promise to board the yacht, and went to the hotel to change his working clothes. He was halted in the corridor by Thora. She beckoned him silently into the gloomy little parlor.

He could not see her face plainly, and he was quite unprepared for the hardened, steady, metallic tone with which she spoke.

"Some ladies have visited you," said Thora. "Two ladies—Miss Demerest and another. Men on the wharf told them you lived here. Then Miss Demerest called me by my name without being told. And she wrote this letter to you and went away."

"Went away?" echoed Etheridge. "Went where?"

Thora withdrew from him to the window and contemplated the whirling fog. Her fists were clenched, and she sobbed once, dry-eyed.

"Good Lord!" groaned Etheridge, half suspecting.

He read Cicely's hastily penciled note. As he feared, it was the senseless outburst of a hysterical girl, shaken by a sleepless night of fear and by what had seemed to her the perilous expedition of making land.

Cicely was sorry to *intrude*—underlined—upon the Middletons and Mr. Etheridge. She had come to the hotel with Mrs. Gorham because there was nowhere else for them to stay. Under the infamous circumstances she could not remain. So now she had insisted that they should go back to Mr. Gorham's yacht in spite of the *danger*—much underlined. Cicely hoped that Etheridge would never insult her by attempting to explain.

Etheridge's first impulse, on the contrary, was to smile tenderly at poor Cicely's wild imaginings. The whole silly affair would be soon a nightmare to her. He must lose no time, and he moved hastily toward the door.

"Wait!" said Thora.

"I'm going to persuade those ladies to come ashore again," explained Etheridge. "Miss Demerest—who wrote this——"

"Yes," interrupted the girl. "She

wrote what she had to say to you. But what she had to say to me—she spoke." Etheridge winced. "She spoke to me," went on Thora wearily, "and she said that she would leave you to me—and she said other things I will not remember—and then the older lady came in and took her away, crying."

"Of course she cried," said Etheridge. "Miss Demerest was not herself. You will forgive her after you know. I will see that you do know, Thora. I will see that you do know how good and kind Miss Demerest really is. It will torment her cruelly when she realizes what she has said to you. So we must make it easy for her——"

"Oh, yes, we must make it easy for Miss Demerest."

"Exactly," pursued Etheridge eagerly. "That is why I am going to her at once."

He buckled his coat and put on his dripping sou'wester.

"Miss Demerest told me," said Thora in her mechanical monotone, "that I kept you from her wrongfully."

"Wrongfully?"

"Because you belonged to her. Did she speak the truth when she told me I was keeping you from her?"

"Oh, it is absurd to hold her to what she said!" protested Etheridge. "You shall see how quickly she will confess the injustice she's done you. Why, I believe the storm has stolen your brains as well as hers! It shall be as clear to-morrow as to-morrow's sun."

Etheridge hastened to the nearest strip of beach, where half a dozen boats were grounded. He could see in the cove of Topsail Point the Cleopatra, phantom-like in the swirl of mist. A solitary boy lay on the sand in the shelter of an overturned dory.

"Want to row with me to the yacht?" queried Etheridge.

"Don't guess so," retorted the youth, grinning vacantly. "Maybe ye'll find somebody over t' the wharf. I got suthin' else to do." Etheridge looked at the harbor. There was a heavy, oily swell, but it did not appear in the least dangerous. "I'll go holler for Abe Hutchins," proposed the boy. "He'll put ye aboard. Shucks! 'Tain't nothin' to do."

"All right," said Etheridge. "Holler for Abe."

"Well, durn me," exclaimed the youngster, "if that schooner ain't gettin' ready for to make sail!"

Etheridge started. In fact he could dimly distinguish some sort of activity on the Cleopatra's deck.

"Hang Abe Hutchins!" he sniffed energetically. "Here, shove me off, will you? I'm bound to board that yacht, whatever happens."

The thought of missing an immediate interview with Cicely clinched his determination, and he appropriated a boat haphazard. The boy shoved him off. Etheridge shipped the oars and pulled for the yacht with all his strength.

The boat slid easily over the long, rolling waves. The scurrying wreaths of fog which skimmed the water now and then were Etheridge's only difficulty. They hung lower than he had anticipated, and occasionally he lost his course. Emerging once from the mist, he stood up to recover the direction of the schooner, and thought he heard the faint clank of hoisting tackle. His next stroke was doubly vigorous, and one of the rotten oars snapped short. Etheridge sprawled ignominiously on his back. The other oar slipped from his grasp, and the boat wallowed sideways. The fog descended on him again. It was so thick that when he yelled through his hands, trumpet fashion, his voice was muffled and sodden.

Except to shout, there was nothing for him to do until the fog rose. It did not seem possible that he should drift out to sea into the gale beyond the point before being discovered either from the yacht or from the shore. While he shouted he measured the visible water around him, thinking at every breath that it was increasing, and that the cloud of mist was breaking away.

Suddenly he saw a boat's black prow poking through the gray shroud. The streaming yellow hair of the single oarsman glowed against the murky background.

"Thora!" he cried.

She did not speak until she had laid her boat alongside his with unexpected skill, holding to the gunwale by her powerful hand.

"Come!" she commanded. "Can you?"

Etheridge floundered at her feet, and Thora resumed her oars. The man, mastered by wonder and admiration, stared at her blankly. His spirit was touched and awed as by a miracle in the uncanny solitude of that fog-cloaked sea. Thora's eyes, habitually dull, now shone like twin sapphires enchanted into life. Her figure, no longer drooping and overburdened, seemed to be transformed so that every curve and line of it was vibrant and beautiful, and around her glorified, eagerly joyous face danced the halo of golden hair.

"So," she said, speaking in rhythm to the sweep of the oars, "we will find what this sea has to give. It is good when a dream comes true!"

She laughed with infinite satisfaction, tossing up her happy face to the wind. Etheridge marveled that he had ever thought her uncomely. Her deep voice rang like the strings of a 'cello.

"Let me take an oar," he faltered. "You're heading too far to the right, I think. Better try for the beach below the point. There's quiet water there."

"Oh, no!" said Thora. "Oh, no, I will take you to her."

"To the yacht?"

"Yes," she declared. "And to her who is there—your lady who fears the sea—my sea!"

The fog lifted, and the Cleopatra swung not a hundred yards away.

"To be in love!" breathed Thora contentedly. "That is life, is it not?"

"Well, we—Miss Demerest and I—have been in love for a long time," stammered Etheridge. "It's no secret."

"Before you came to the mountain?"

"Why, yes."

"I was in love before then, too," said Thora. "But it was a secret!"

Etheridge's heart gave a tiny leap of relief.

"If I have a right to say so," he hazarded, "I wish you every happiness."

"And I shall have it!" Thora cried boastfully. "It has been given to me. Everybody to his own!"

She grasped both oars in one hand, and waved her arm with a curious movement at the ragged horizon. Beyond Topsail Point the gigantic green rollers were

flecked with white. A vagrant, storm-perplexed gull dipped out of the sky.

"Everybody to his own," repeated Thora more quietly. "And I bring you to your own, Mr. Etheridge," she added with a gay intensity which was not quite mirth. "To the lady who told me—what I have forgotten!"

Half a dozen sailors in oilskins shimmering like bronze leaned over the rail of the schooner, where a rope ladder hung. A thin line whirled into Thora's arms. Etheridge gripped the ladder. To steady himself, he rested his hand on Thora's shoulder, and against his will he fancied that her lips brushed it.

"Leave me the line, and up you go," he said.

"You first!" she insisted.

"Oh, nonsense!" laughed Etheridge.

Suddenly Thora pushed an oar-blade against the yacht's white side. The maneuver left Etheridge dangling to the ladder helplessly. A sailor guffawed, and Etheridge, swallowing his wrath, climbed to the deck. He was conscious that he was cutting a contemptible figure, but the sight of Miss Demerest, huddled in a companionway, drove from his mind all thoughts of chagrin, and indeed of everything except her penitential face. He was glad enough to follow her to the lee of a deck-house, and to tell her over and over again that she was forgiven.

## VI

At length Cicely, tearful and subdued, introduced Etheridge to the Gorhams in the cabin of the yacht.

"A risky little voyage you had through the fog," said Mr. Gorham; "but your crew seemed to know her business."

Etheridge tried to joke at the inglorious episode, and turned to Cicely with an uneasy laugh.

"I'll fetch Miss Middleton below," he suggested. "This is twice she's rescued me from an ugly scrape."

He hastened with Gorham to the deck. It had escaped his attention that a reeking smother of mist was settling on the Cleopatra.

"Young woman cast off and started ashore, sir," said a stupid-eyed sailor, "maybe five minutes ago."

"What?" expostulated Gorham.

"Couldn't stop her, begging your pardon, sir."

Etheridge darted to the rail and peered toward the wharves. He could not see ten feet.

"She was headed the other way," the sailor said. "Toward the point. Weather thickened quick, sir."

"Can't you lower a boat?" asked Etheridge of Gorham.

"Of course," replied the other, pursing his lips. "But it will be like looking for a needle in a haystack until this stuff clears. Besides, as I said before, the girl seems to know her business. Knew what she was doing, didn't she, Olaf? Wasn't afraid, eh?"

"She was singing a song of the old country when she pulled off, sir," chuckled the Norwegian.

"I shall have to ask some of your men to put me ashore anyhow, Mr. Gorham," said Etheridge ruefully. "Perhaps at the same time we might——"

A vagary of the gale lifted the misty barrier which had screened the headland of Topsail Point. The picture of the tossing sea beyond was framed on one side by the swirl of fog, on the other by the rocky bluff. Midway between them, poised bird-like on the snowy crest of a great wave, a black rowboat made a distant blot against the lurid sky. A yellow-haired girl stood upright in the boat, stretching out her hands to welcome the oncoming rush of the remorseless tempest. Then the fog drew together sharply, like the stage-curtains of a theater.

Men on the Cleopatra's deck bustled about, making ready the cutter. Etheridge's deadened brain finally became aware of the speech of the yacht's sailing-master.

"It's no use, Mr. Gorham," the grizzled veteran was saying. "No use, sir, on earth! The wind has caught her. It's blowing her out faster than four men could row in that blind mess. And it's a lifeboat's work yonder. She's found the open sea by this!"

"That settles it, then!" sighed Gorham, striking his fist on the rail.

Etheridge groped for a stanchion.

"Yes, she's found the open sea!" he repeated senselessly. "She's found the open sea!"



# LIGHT VERSE

## THE BOOKWORM'S PLAINT

ONE night a bookworm crawled out lazily,  
And, sitting on my ink-well, gazed at me  
With air forlorn and manner somewhat stale.

I asked him why it was he looked so pale.

"I fear," said he,  
"This diet's killing me.

O! late I've had to feed too much on Style;  
I've found no beef of substance this long while.

It seems to me that in our modern books  
We get too much of sauces from our cooks,  
And not enough of solid, wholesome food  
To satisfy our appetites for good.

It seems as if our literary clan  
Were victims to some culinary plan  
In which it makes no difference 'neath the sun

Just what you cook, but how the thing is done.

And as for me, who have to eat my way  
Through all the new creations of the day,  
Must feed on words full of fine technique,  
On poems that to me are so much Greek,  
On highly polished sequences of words  
As void of meaning as the chirps of birds,  
Through which to-day our writers win their bays—

I feel as if I'd dined on mayonnaise;

And who'd grow fat  
On that?"

Poor worm! Indeed his was a sorry plight

As he presented it to me that night,  
And taking pity on him I straightway  
Gave him a meal of Mr. Thackeray,  
With just a slice or two of good old Lamb,  
Topped off with one deep draft of O.

Khayyam—

Whereat with grateful look back home he crept,

And from his later snores I judge he slept  
The good sound sleep of those who are discreet,

And, 'stead of sauces, feed on solid meat!

*John Kendrick Bangs*

## A YEARN IN SUMMER

I WOULD gladly be a bummer,  
Through the green and drowsy summer,  
In some shady, undulating, soporific little place.

In a hammock lying prone,  
Never moving, breathing only,  
With an African attendant hired to fan my glowing face.

I should like to sit in porches  
By the starlight's twinkling torches

Close to some delicious maiden dowered  
with fascinating looks;

One of those attractive creatures  
Of such perfect form and features  
As you always meet in summer-time—ac-  
cording to the books.

Through the dells I'd fain skedaddle—  
I should like to wade and paddle,  
I should like to "make the welkin ring,"  
however that is done;  
I should like to drop a hooklet  
In some little babbling brooklet,  
Catching fishlets—also snaglets—which I'm  
sure is rare good fun.

Or upon a yacht expensive  
I should like a trip extensive,  
With a coterie of kindred souls to be the  
vessel's crew;  
And we'd sail to Umatilla,  
Madagascar, and Manila,  
Making glad the golden moments as we  
bounded o'er the blue.

I'd enjoy a hand at tennis;  
Or I'd like to go to Venice,  
There to sweep along the Grand Canal be-  
hind a gondolier;  
Or I'd like to be devoting  
Days and nights to motor-boating  
Or to racing in an auto on a roadway flat  
and clear.

I should like to ride and bike, too—  
There are lots of things I'd like to  
Do if any one should ask me what vaca-  
tion I'd prefer;  
But I find that my vacations  
Are not swamped with invitations  
Since I'm living in a hall-room at eleven  
dollars per!

*Wallace Irwin*

## BEWITCHED

ARE you sorceress or Circe,  
Never warmed with thought of mercy,  
Calmly binding me within your cruel  
snare?

Have you charmed the tender skies  
Till they linger in your eyes?  
Have you deftly wound the sunlight in  
your hair?

Deep enchantress, witch, or fairy,  
Do you join with comrades airy,  
Swiftly flying on the racing clouds  
above?

Are you these, oh, nymph unruly?  
Are you these, or are you truly  
A distracting mortal maiden, whom I  
love?

*Doris Webb*