

***CHARLES EDWARD
CARRYL***



***THE ADMIRAL'S
CARAVAN***

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The Admiral's Caravan

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TO CONSTANCE

Sweet Chatterbox, 't is thou that hast
beguiled
My fancy, as it drew the little child
Who in these pages lives; her gentle ways
Are but the reflex of thy round of days.
The trip of syllable I held so dear,
And all thy small remarks, are treasured here—
Charmed by the alchemy of love to stay
The while thy blissful childhood slips away.
Kind little heart, that knows no selfish thought,
Read here the tale that thou, thyself, hast
wrought!

Chapter I. Dorothy and the Admiral

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Chapter I. Dorothy and the Admiral.

The Blue Admiral Inn stood on the edge of the shore, with its red brick walls, and its gabled roof, and the old willow-trees that overhung it, all reflected in the quiet water as if the harbor had been a great mirror lying upon its back in the sun. This made it a most attractive place to look at. Then there were crisp little dimity curtains hanging in the windows of the coffee-room and giving great promise of tidiness and comfort within, and

this made it a most delightful place to think about. And then there was a certain suggestion of savory cooking in the swirl of the smoke that came out of the tall, old-fashioned chimneys, and this made it a most difficult place to stay away from. In fact, if any ships had chanced to come into the little harbor, I believe everybody on board of them, from the captains down to the cabin-boys, would have scrambled into the boats the moment the anchors were down and pulled away for the Blue Admiral Inn.



THE ADMIRAL

But, so far as ships were concerned, the harbor was as dead as a door-nail, and poor old Uncle Porticle, who kept the inn, had long ago given up all idea of expecting them, and had fallen into a melancholy habit of standing in the little porch that opened on the village street, gazing first to the right and then to the left, and lastly at the opposite side of the way, as if he had a faint hope that certain seafaring men were about to steal a march upon him from the land-side of the town. And Dorothy, who was a lonely little child, with no one in the world to care for but Uncle Porticle, had

also fallen into a habit of sitting on the step of the porch by way of keeping him company; and here they passed many quiet hours together, with the big robin hopping about in his cage, and with the Admiral himself, on his pedestal beside the porch, keeping watch and ward over the fortunes of the inn.

Now the Admiral was only a yard high, and was made of wood into the bargain; but he was a fine figure of a man for all that, being dressed in a very beautiful blue coat (as befitted his name) and canary-colored knee-breeches, and wearing a fore-and-aft hat rakishly perched on the back of his head. On the other hand, he had sundry stray cracks in the calves of his legs, and was badly battered about the nose; but, after all, this only gave him a certain weather-beaten appearance as if he had been around the world any number of times in all sorts of company; and for as long as Dorothy could remember he had been standing on his pedestal beside the porch, enjoying the sunshine and defying the rain, as a gallant officer should, and earnestly gazing at the opposite side of the street through a spy-glass.

Now, what the Admiral was staring at was a mystery. He might, for instance, have been

looking at the wooden Highlander that stood at the door of Mr. Pendle's instrument-shop, for nothing more magnificent than this particular Highlander could possibly be imagined. His clothes were of every color of the rainbow, and he had silver buckles on his shoes, and brass buttons on his coat, and he was varnished to such an extent that you could hardly look at him without winking. Then his hair and his whiskers were so red, and his legs were so pink and so fat and so lifelike, that it seemed as if you could almost hear him speak; and, what was more, he had been standing for years at the door of the shop, proudly holding up a preposterous wooden watch that gave half-past three as the correct time at all hours of the day and night. In fact, it would have been no great wonder if the Admiral had stared at him to the end of his days.

Then there was Sir Walter Rosettes, a long-bodied little man in a cavalier's cloak, with a ruff about his neck and enormous



THE HIGHLANDER



SIR WALTER
ROSETTES

rosettes on his shoes, who stood on a pedestal at old Mrs. Peevy's garden gate, offering an imitation tobacco-plant, free of charge, as it were, to anyone who would take the trouble of carrying it home. This bold device was intended to call attention to the fact that Mrs. Peevy kept a tobacco-shop in the front parlor of her little cottage behind the hollyhock bushes, the announcement being backed up by the spectacle of three pipes arranged in a tripod in the window, and by the words "Smokers' Emporium" displayed in gold letters on the glass; and, by the way, Dorothy knew perfectly well who *this* little man was, as somebody had taken the trouble of writing his name with a lead-pencil on his pedestal just below the toes of his shoes.

And lastly there was old Mrs. Peevy herself, who might be seen at any hour of the day, sitting at the door of her cottage, fast asleep in the shade of her big cotton umbrella with the Chinese mandarin for a handle. She wasn't much to look at, perhaps, but there was no way of getting at the Admiral's taste in such matters, so he stared through his spy-glass year in and year out, and nobody was any the wiser.

Now from sitting so much in the porch and turning these things over in her mind,

Dorothy had come to know the Admiral and the Highlander and Sir Walter Rosettes as well as she could possibly know persons who didn't know her, and who couldn't have spoken to her if they *had* known her; but nothing came of the acquaintance until a certain Christmas eve. Of course, nobody knew better than Dorothy what Christmas eve should be like. The snow should be falling softly, and just enough should come down to cover up the pavements and make the streets look beautifully white and clean, and to edge the trees and the lamp-posts and the railings as if they were trimmed with soft lace; and just enough to tempt children to come out, and not so much as to keep grown people at home—in fact, just enough for Christmas eve, and not a bit more.

Then the streets should be full of people hurrying along and all carrying plenty of parcels; and the windows should be very gay with delightful wreaths of greens, and bunches of holly with plenty of scarlet berries on them, and the greengrocers should have little forests of assorted hemlock-trees on the sidewalks in front of their shops, and everything should be as cheerful and as bustling as possible.

And, if you liked, there might be just a faint smell of cooking floating about in the

air, but this was not important by any means, as it might happen at any time.

Well, all these good old-fashioned things came to pass on this particular Christmas eve except the snow; and in place of that there came a soft, warm rain which was all very well in its way, except that, as Dorothy said, "It didn't belong on Christmas eve." And just at nightfall she went out into the porch to smell the rain, and to see how Christmas matters generally were getting on in the wet; and she was watching the people hurrying by, and trying to fancy what was in the mysterious-looking parcels they were carrying so carefully under their umbrellas, when she suddenly noticed that the toes of the Admiral's shoes were turned sideways on his pedestal, and looking up at him she saw that he had tucked his spy-glass under his arm, and was gazing down backward at his legs with an air of great concern.

This was so startling that Dorothy almost jumped out of her shoes, and she was just turning to run back into the house when the Admiral caught sight of her, and called out excitedly, "Cracks in my legs!"—and then stared hard at her as if demanding some sort of an explanation of this extraordinary state of affairs.

Dorothy was dreadfully frightened, but she was a very polite little girl, and would have answered the town pump if it had spoken to her; so she swallowed down a great lump that had come up into her throat, and said, as respectfully as she could, "I'm very sorry, sir. I suppose it must be because they are so very old."

"Old!" exclaimed the Admiral, making a desperate attempt to get a view of his legs through his spy-glass. "Why, they're no older than I am"; and, upon thinking it over, this seemed so very true that Dorothy felt quite ashamed of her remark and stood looking at him in a rather foolish way.

"Try again," said the Admiral, with a patronizing air.

"No," said Dorothy, gravely shaking her head, "I'm sure I don't know any other reason; only it seems rather strange, you know, that you've never even seen them before."



THE ADMIRAL, MAKING A
DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO GET A
VIEW OF HIS LEGS THROUGH HIS
SPY-GLASS