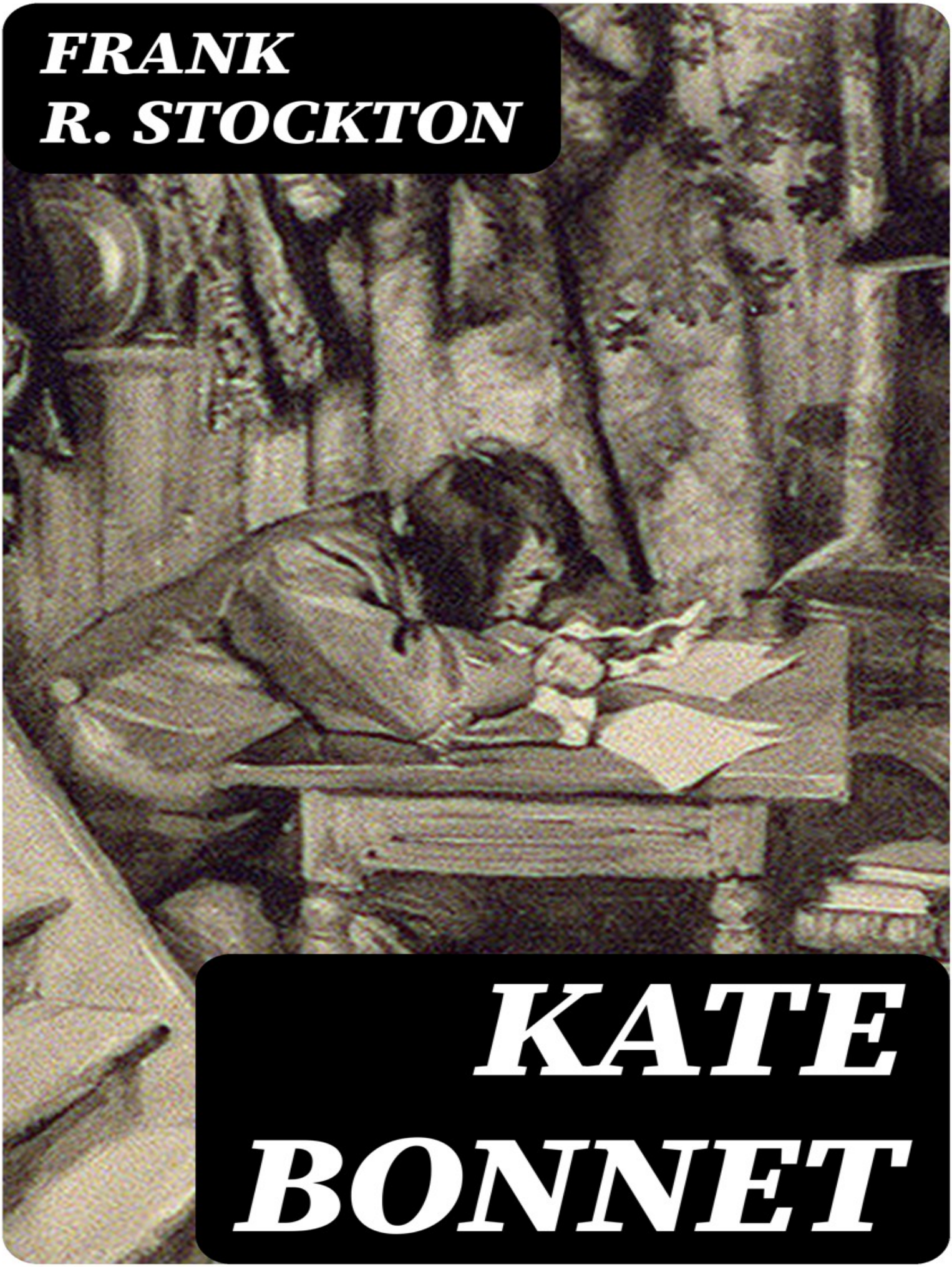
FRANK R. STOCKTON



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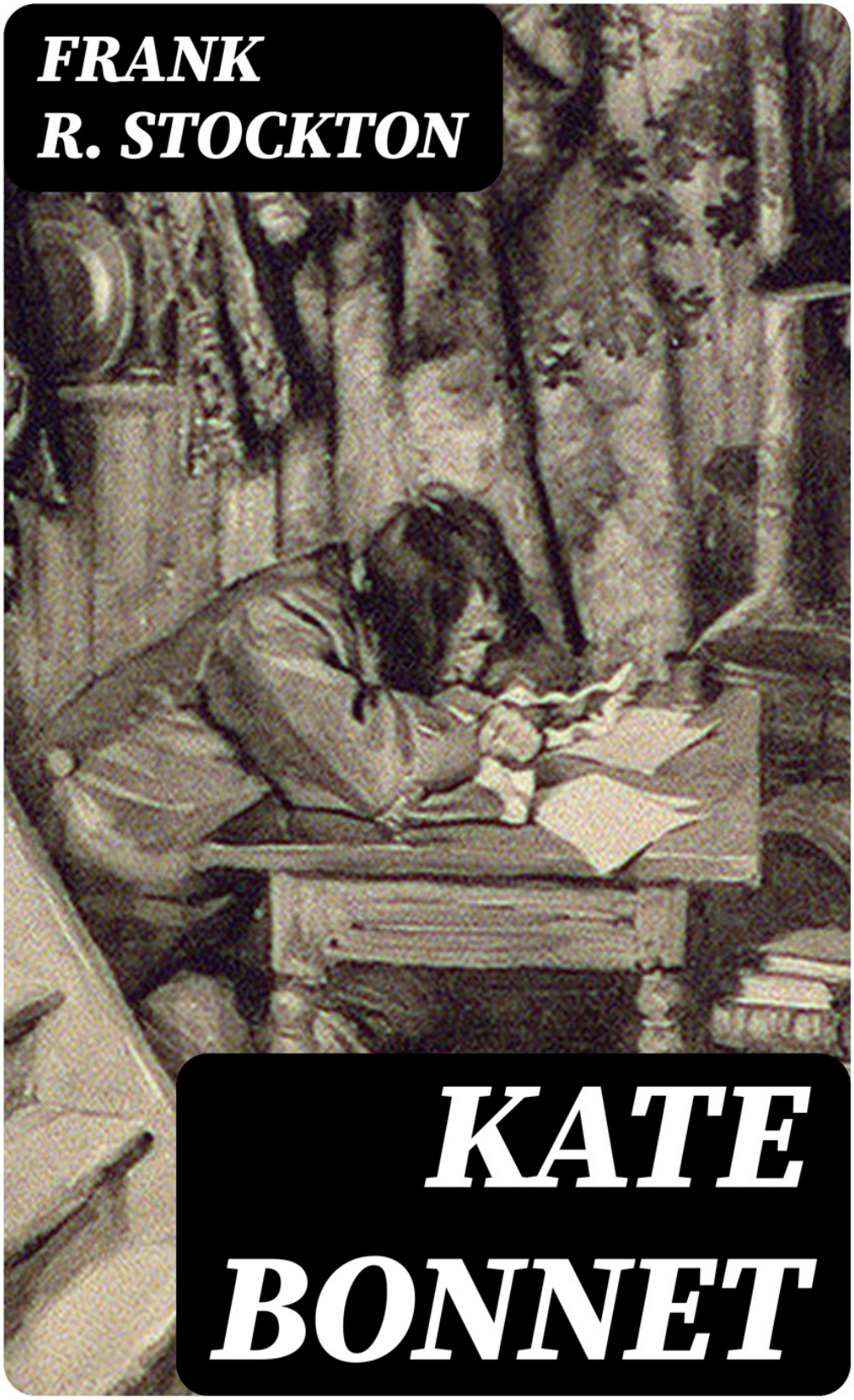

KATE BONNET

Frank R. Stockton

Kate Bonnet

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I. Two young people, a ship, and a fish

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THE month was September and the place was in the neighbourhood of Bridgetown, in the island of Barbadoes. The seventeenth century was not seventeen years old, but the girl who walked slowly down to the river bank was three years its senior. She carried a fishing-rod and line, and her name was Kate Bonnet. She was a bright-faced, quick-moving young person, and apparently did not expect to catch many fish, for she had no basket in which to carry away her finny prizes. Nor, apparently, did she have any bait, except that which was upon her hook and which had been affixed there by one of the servants at her home, not far away. In fact, Mistress Kate was too nicely dressed and her gloves were too clean to have much to do with fish or bait, but she seated herself on a little rock in a shady spot not far from the water and threw forth her line. Then she gazed about her; a little up the river and a good deal down the river.

It was truly a pleasant scene which lay before her eyes. Not half a mile away was the bridge which gave this English settlement its name, and beyond the river were woods and cultivated fields, with here and there a little bit of smoke, for it was growing late in the afternoon, when smoke meant supper. Beyond all this the land rose from the lower ground near the river and the sea, in terrace after terrace, until the

upper stretches of its woodlands showed clear against the evening sky.

But Mistress Kate Bonnet now gazed steadily down the stream, beyond the town and the bridge, and paid no more attention to the scenery than the scenery did to her, although one was quite as beautiful as the other.

There was a bunch of white flowers in the hat of the young girl; not a very large one, and not a very small one, but of such a size as might be easily seen from the bridge, had any one happened to be crossing about that time. And, in fact, as the wearer of the hat and the white flowers still continued to gaze at the bridge, she saw some one come out upon it with a quick, buoyant step, and then she saw him stop and gaze steadily up the river. At this she turned her head, and her eyes went out over the beautiful landscape and the wide terraces rising above each other towards the sky.

It is astonishing how soon after this a young man, dressed in a brown suit, and very pleasant to look upon, came rapidly walking along the river bank. This was Master Martin Newcombe, a young Englishman, not two years from his native land, and now a prosperous farmer on the other side of the river.

It often happened that Master Newcombe, at the close of his agricultural labours, would put on a good suit of clothes and ride over the bridge to the town, to attend to business or to social duties, as the case might be. But, sometimes, not willing to encumber himself with a horse, he walked over the bridge and strolled or hurried along the river bank. This was one of the times in which he hurried. He had been

caught by the vision of the bunch of white flowers in the hat of the girl who was seated on the rock in the shade.

As Master Newcombe stepped near, his spirits rose, as they had not always risen, as he approached Mistress Kate, for he perceived that, although she held the handle of her rod in her hand, the other end of it was lying on the ground, not very far away from the bait and the hook which, it was very plain, had not been in the water at all. She must have been thinking of something else besides fishing, he thought. But he did not dare to go on with that sort of thinking in the way he would have liked to do it. He had not too great a belief in himself, though he was very much in love with Kate Bonnet.

"Is this the best time of day for fishing, Master Newcombe?" she said, without rising or offering him her hand. "For my part, I don't believe it is."

He smiled as he threw his hat upon the ground. "Let me put your line a little farther out." And so saying, he took the rod from her hand and stepped between her and the bait, which must have been now quite hot from lying so long in a bit of sunshine. He rearranged the bait and threw the line far out into the river. Then he gave her the rod again. He seated himself on the ground near-by.

"This is the second time I have been over the bridge to-day," he said, "and this morning, very early, I saw, for the first time, your father's ship, which was lying below the town. It is a fine vessel, so far as I can judge, being a landsman."

"Yes," said she, "and I have been on board of her and have gone all over her, and have seen many things which

are queer and strange to me. But the strangest thing about her, to my mind, being a landswoman, is, that she should belong to my father. There are many things which he has not, which it would be easy to believe he would like to have, but that a ship, with sails and anchors and hatchways, should be one of these things, it is hard to imagine."

Young Newcombe thought it was impossible to imagine, but he expressed himself discreetly.

"It must be that he is going to engage in trade," he said; "has he not told you of his intentions?"

"Not much," said she. "He says he is going to cruise about among the islands, and when I asked him if he would take me, he laughed, and answered that he might do so, but that I must never say a word of it to Madam Bonnet, for if she heard of it she might change his plans."

The wicked young man found himself almost wishing that the somewhat bad-tempered Madam Bonnet might hear of and change any plan which might take her husband's daughter from this town, especially in a vessel; for vessels were always terribly tardy when any one was waiting for their return. And, besides, it often happened that vessels never came back at all.

"I shall take a little trip with him even if we don't go far; it would be ridiculous for my father to own a ship, and for me never to sail in her."

"That would not be so bad," said Master Martin, feeling that a short absence might be endured. Moreover, if a little pleasure trip were to be made, it was reasonable enough to suppose that other people, not belonging to the Bonnet family, might be asked to sail as guests.

"What my father expects to trade in," said she contemplatively gazing before her, "I am sure I do not know. It cannot be horses or cattle, for he has not enough of them to make such a venture profitable. And as to sugar-cane, or anything from his farm, I am sure he has a good enough market here for all he has to sell. Certainly he does not produce enough to make it necessary for him to buy a ship in order to carry them away."

"It is opined," said Martin, "by the people of the town, that Major Bonnet intends to become a commercial man, and to carry away to the other islands, and perhaps to the old country itself, the goods of other people."

"Now that would be fine!" said Mistress Kate, her eyes sparkling, "for I should then surely go with him, and would see the world, and perhaps London." And her face flushed with the prospect.

Martin's face did not flush. "But if your father's ship sailed on a long voyage," he said, with a suspicion of apprehension, "he would not sail with her; he would send her under the charge of others."

The girl shook her head. "When she sails," said she, "he sails in her. If you had heard him talking as I have heard him, you would not doubt that. And if he sails, I sail."

Martin's soul grew quite sad. There were very good reasons to believe that this dear girl might sail away from Bridgetown, and from him. She might come back to the town, but she might not come back to him.

"Mistress Kate," said he, looking very earnestly at her, "do you know that such speech as this makes my heart sink? You know I love you, I have told you so before. If you

were to sail away, I care not to what port, this world would be a black place for me."

"That is like a lover," she exclaimed a little pertly; "it is like them all, every man of them. They must have what they want, and they must have it, no matter who else may suffer."

He rose and stood by her.

"But I don't want you to suffer," he said. "Do you think it would be suffering to live with one who loved you, who would spend his whole life in making you happy, who would look upon you as the chief thing in the world, and have no other ambition than to make himself worthy of you?"

She looked up at him with a little smile.

"That would, doubtless, be all very pleasant for you," she said, "and in order that you might be pleased, you would have her give up so much. That is the way with men! Now, here am I, born in the very end of the last century, and having had, consequently, no good out of that, and with but seventeen years in this century, and most of it passed in girlhood and in school; and now, when the world might open before me for a little, here you come along and tell me all that you would like to have, and that you would like me to give up."

"But you should not think," said he, and that was all he said, for at that moment Kate Bonnet felt a little jerk at the end of her line, and then a good strong pull.

"I have a fish!" she cried, and sprang to her feet. Then, with a swoop, she threw into the midst of the weeds and wild flowers a struggling fish which Martin hastened to take from the hook.

"A fine fellow!" he cried, "and he has arrived just in time to make a dainty dish for your supper."

"Ah, no!" she said, winding the line about her rod; "if I were to take that fish to the house, it would sorely disturb Madam Bonnet. She would object to my catching it; she would object to having it prepared for the table; she would object to having it eaten, when she had arranged that we should eat something else. No, I will give it to you, Master Newcombe; I suppose in your house you can cook and eat what you please."

"Yes," said he; "but how delightful it would be if we could eat it together."

"Meaning," said she, "that I should never eat other fish than those from this river. No, sir; that may not be. I have a notion that the first foreign fish I shall eat will be found in the island of Jamaica, for my father said, that possibly he might first take a trip there, where lives my mother's brother, whom we have not seen for a long time. But, as I told you before, nobody must know this. And now I must go to my supper, and you must take yours home with you."

"And I am sure it will be the sweetest fish," he said, "that was ever caught in all these waters. But I beg, before you go, you will promise me one thing."

"Promise you!" said she, quite loftily.

"Yes," he answered; "tell me that, no matter where you go, you will not leave Bridgetown without letting me know of it?"

"I will not, indeed," said she; "and if it is to Jamaica we go, perhaps my father—but no, I don't believe he will do

that. He will be too much wrapped up in his ship to want for company to whom he must attend and talk."

"Ah! there would be no need of that!" said Newcombe, with a lover's smile.

She smiled back at him.

"Good-night!" she said, "and see to it that you eat your fish to-night while it is so fresh." Then she ran up the winding path to her home.

He stood and looked after her until she had disappeared among the shrubbery, after which he walked away.

"I should have said more than I did," he reflected; "seldom have I had so good a chance to speak and urge my case. It was that confounded ship. Her mind is all for that and not for me."

II. A fruit-basket and a friend

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CHAPTER II

A FRUIT-BASKET AND A FRIEND

MAJOR STEDE BONNET, the father of Kate, whose mother had died when the child was but a year old, was a middle-aged Englishman of a fair estate, in the island of Barbadoes. He had been an officer in the army, was well educated and intelligent, and now, in vigorous middle life, had become a confirmed country gentleman. His herds and his crops were, to him, the principal things on earth, with the exception of his daughter; for, although he had married for the second time, there were a good many things which he valued more than his wife. And it had therefore occasioned a good deal of surprise, and more or less small talk among his neighbours, that Major Bonnet should want to buy a ship. But he had been a soldier in his youth, and soldiers are very apt to change their manner of living, and so, if Major Bonnet had grown tired of his farm and had determined to go into commercial enterprises, it was not, perhaps, a very amazing thing that a military man who had turned planter should now turn to be something else.

Madam Bonnet had heard of the ship, although she had not been told anything about her step-daughter taking a trip in her, and if she had heard she might not have objected. She had regarded, in an apparently careless manner, her

husband's desire to navigate the sea; for, no matter to what point he might happen to sail, his ship would take him away from Barbadoes, and that would very well suit her. She was getting tired of Major Bonnet. She did not believe he had ever been a very good soldier; she was positively sure that he was not a good farmer; and she had the strongest kind of doubt as to his ability as a commercial man. But as this new business would free her from him, at least for a time, she was well content; and, although she should feel herself somewhat handicapped by the presence of Kate, she did not intend to allow that young lady to interfere with her plans and purposes during the absence of the head of the house. So she went her way, saying nothing derisive about the nautical life, except what she considered it necessary for her to do, in order to maintain her superior position in the household.

Major Bonnet was now very much engaged and a good deal disturbed, for he found that projected sailing, even in one's own craft, is not always smooth sailing. He was putting his vessel in excellent order, and was fitting her out generously in the way of stores and all manner of nautical needfuls, not forgetting the guns necessary for defence in these somewhat disordered times, and his latest endeavours were towards the shipping of a suitable crew. Seafaring men were not scarce in the port of Bridgetown, but Major Bonnet, now entitled to be called "Captain," was very particular about his crew, and it took him a long time to collect suitable men.

As he was most truly a landsman, knowing nothing about the sea or the various intricate methods of navigating a

vessel thereupon, he was compelled to secure a real captain —one who would be able to take charge of the vessel and crew, and who would do, and have done, in a thoroughly seamanlike manner, what his nominal skipper should desire and ordain.

This absolutely necessary personage had been secured almost as soon as the vessel had been purchased, before any of the rest of the crew had signed ship's articles; and it was under his general supervision that the storing and equipment had been carried on. His name was Sam Loftus. He was a big man with a great readiness of speech. There were, perhaps, some things he could not do, but there seemed to be nothing that he was not able to talk about. As has been said, the rest of the crew came in slowly, but they did come, and Major Bonnet told his daughter that when he had secured four more men, it was his intention to leave port.

"And sail for Jamaica?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, yes," he said, with an affectionate smile, "and I will leave you with your Uncle Delaplaine, where you can stay while I make some little cruises here and there."

"And so I am really to go?" she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling.

"Really to go," said he.

"And what may I pack up?" she asked, thinking of her step-mother.

"Not much," he said, "not much. We will be able to find at Spanish Town something braver in the way of apparel than anything you now possess. It will be some days before we

sail, and I shall have quietly conveyed on board such belongings as you need."

She was very happy, and she laughed.

"Yours will be an easily laden ship," said she, "for you take in with you no great store of goods for traffic. But I suppose you design to pick up your cargo among the islands where you cruise, and at a less cost, perchance, than it could be procured here?"

"Yes, yes," he said; "you have hit it fairly, my little girl, you have hit it fairly."

New annoyances now began to beset Major Bonnet. What his daughter had remarked in pleasantry, the people of the town began to talk about unpleasantly. Here was a good-sized craft about to set sail, with little or no cargo, but with a crew apparently much larger than her requirements, but not yet large enough for the desires of her owner. To be sure, as Major Bonnet did not know anything about ships, he was bound to do something odd when he bought one and set forth to sail upon her, but there were some odd things which ought to be looked into; and there were people who advised that the attention of the colonial authorities should be drawn to this ship of their farmer townsman. Major Bonnet had such a high reputation as a good citizen, that there were few people who thought it worth while to trouble themselves about his new business venture, but a good many disagreeable things came to the ears of Sam Loftus, who reported them to his employer, and it was agreed between them that it would be wise for them to sail as soon as they could, even if they did not wait for the few men they had considered to be needed.

Early upon a cloudy afternoon, Major Bonnet and his daughter went out in a small boat to look at his vessel, the Sarah Williams, which was then lying a short distance below the town.

"Now, Kate," said the good Major Bonnet, when they were on board, "I have fitted up a little room for you below, which I think you will find comfortable enough during the voyage to Jamaica. I will take you with me when I return to the house, and then you can make up a little package of clothes which it will be easy to convey to the river bank when the time shall come for you to depart. I cannot now say just when that time will arrive; it may be in the daytime or it may be at night, but it will be soon, and I will give you good notice, and I will come up the river for you in a boat. But now I am very busy, and I will leave you to become acquainted with the Sarah Williams, which, for a few days, will be your home. I shall be obliged to row over to the town for, perhaps, half an hour, but Ben Greenway will be here to attend to anything you need until I return."

Ben Greenway was a Scotchman, who had for a long time been Major Bonnet's most trusted servant. He was a good farmer, was apt at carpenter work, and knew a good deal about masonry. A few months ago, any one living in that region would have been likely to say, if the subject had been brought up, that without Ben Greenway Major Bonnet could not get along at all, not even for a day, for he depended upon him in so many ways. And yet, now the master of the estate was about to depart, for nobody knew how long, and leave his faithful servant behind. The reason he gave was, that Ben could not be spared from the farm; but people in

general, and Ben in particular, thought this very poor reasoning. Any sort of business which made it necessary for Major Bonnet to separate himself from Ben Greenway was a very poor business, and should not be entered upon.

The deck of the Sarah Williams presented a lively scene as Kate stood upon the little quarter-deck and gazed forward. The sailors were walking about and sitting about, smoking, talking, or coiling things away. There were people from the shore with baskets containing fruit and other wares for sale, and all stirring and new and very interesting to Miss Kate as she stood, with her ribbons flying in the river breeze.

"Who is that young fellow?" she said to Ben Greenway, who was standing by her, "the one with the big basket? It seems to me I have seen him before."

"Oh, ay!" said Ben, "he has been on the farm. That is Dickory Charter, whose father was drowned out fishing a few years ago. He is a good lad, an' boards all ships comin' in or goin' out to sell his wares, for his mither leans on him now, having no ither."

The youth, who seemed to feel that he was being talked about, now walked aft, and held up his basket. He was a handsome youngster, lightly clad and barefooted; and, although not yet full grown, of a strong and active build. Kate beckoned to him, and bought an orange.

"An' how is your mither, Dickory?" said Ben.

"Right well, I thank you," said he, and gazed at Kate, who was biting a hole in her orange.

Then, as he turned and went away, having no reason to expect to sell anything more, Kate remarked to Ben: "That is

truly a fine-looking young fellow. He walks with such strength and ease, like a deer or a cat."

"That comes from no' wearin' shoes," said Ben; "but as for me, I would like better to wear shoes an' walk mair stiffly."

Now there came aft a sailor, who touched his cap and told Ben Greenway that he was wanted below to superintend the stowing some cases of the captain's liquors. So Kate, left to herself, began to think about what she should pack into her little bundle. She would make it very small, for the fewer things she took with her the more she would buy at Spanish Town. But the contents of her package did not require much thought, and she soon became a little tired staying there by herself, and therefore she was glad to see young Dickory, with his orange-basket, walking aft.

"I don't want any more oranges," she said, when he was near enough, "but perhaps you may have other fruit?"

He came up to her and put down his basket. "I have bananas, but perhaps you don't like them?"

"Oh, yes, I do!" she answered.

But, without offering to show her the fruit, Dickory continued: "There's one thing I don't like, and that's the men on board your ship."

"What do you mean?" she asked, amazed.

"Speak lower," he said; and, as he spoke, he bethought himself that it might be well to hold out towards her a couple of bananas.

"They're a bad, hard lot of men," he said. "I heard that from more than one person. You ought not to stay on this ship."

"And what do you know about it, Mr. Impudence?" she asked, with brows uplifted. "I suppose my father knows what is good for me."

"But he is not here," said Dickory.

Kate looked steadfastly at him. He did not seem as ruddy as he had been. And then she looked out upon the forward deck, and the thought came to her that when she had first noticed these men it had seemed to her that they were, indeed, a rough, hard lot. Kate Bonnet was a brave girl, but without knowing why she felt a little frightened.

"Your name is Dickory, isn't it?" she said.

He looked up quickly, for it pleased him to hear her use his name. "Indeed it is," he answered.

"Well, Dickory," said she, "I wish you would go and find Ben Greenway. I should like to have him with me until my father comes back."

He turned, and then stopped for an instant. He said in a clear voice: "I will go and get the shilling changed." And then he hurried away.

He was gone a long time, and Kate could not understand it. Surely the Sarah Williams was not so big a ship that it would take all this time to look for Ben Greenway. But he did come back, and his face seemed even less ruddy than when she had last seen it. He came up close to her, and began handling his fruit.

"I don't want to frighten you," he said, "but I must tell you about things. I could not find Ben Greenway, and I asked one of the men about him, feigning that he owed me for some fruit, and the man looked at another man and

laughed, and said that he had been sent for in a hurry, and had gone ashore in a boat."

"I cannot believe that," said Kate; "he would not go away and leave me."

Dickory could not believe it either, and could offer no explanation.

Kate now looked anxiously over the water towards the town, but no father was to be seen.

"Now let me tell you what I found out," said Dickory, "you must know it. These men are wicked robbers. I slipped quietly among them to find out something, with my shilling in my hand, ready to ask somebody to change, if I was noticed."

"Well, what next?" laying her hand on his arm.

"Oh, don't do that!" he said quickly; "better take hold of a banana. I spied that Big Sam, who is sailing-master, and a black-headed fellow taking their ease behind some boxes, smoking, and I listened with all sharpness. And Sam, he said to the other one—not in these words, but in language not fit for you to hear—what he would like to do would be to get off on the next tide. And when the other fellow asked him why he didn't go then and leave the fool—meaning your father—to go back to his farm, Big Sam answered, with a good many curses, that if he could do it he would drop down the river that very minute and wait at the bar until the water was high enough to cross, but that it was impossible because they must not sail until your father had brought his cash-box on board. It would be stupid to sail without that cash-box."

"Dickory," said she, "I am frightened; I want to go on shore, and I want to see my father and tell him all these things."

"But there is no boat," said Dickory; "every boat has left the ship."

"But you have one," said she, looking over the side.

"It is a poor little canoe," he answered, "and I am afraid they would not let me take you away, I having no orders to do so."

Kate was about to open her mouth to make an indignant reply, when he exclaimed, "But here comes a boat from the town; perhaps it is your father!"

She sprang to the rail. "No, it is not," she exclaimed; "it holds but one man, who rows."

She stood, without a word, watching the approaching boat, Dickory doing the same, but keeping himself out of the general view. The boat came alongside and the oarsman handed up a note, which was presently brought to Kate by Big Sam, young Dickory Charter having in the meantime slipped below with his basket.

"A note from your father, Mistress Bonnet," said the sailing-master. And as she read it he stood and looked upon her.

"My father tells me," said Kate, speaking decidedly but quietly, "that he will come on board very soon, but I do not wish to wait for him. I will go back to the town. I have affairs which make it necessary for me to return immediately. Tell the man who brought the note that I will go back with him."

Big Sam raised his eyebrows and his face assumed a look of trouble.

"It grieves me greatly, Mistress Bonnet," he said, "but the man has gone. He was ordered not to wait here."

"Shout after him!" cried Kate; "call him back!"

Sam stepped to the rail and looked over the water. "He is too far away," he said, "but I will try." And then he shouted, but the man paid no attention, and kept on rowing to shore.

"I thought it was too far," he said, "but your father will be back soon; he sent that message to me. And now, fair mistress, what can we do for you? Shall it be that we send you some supper? Or, as your cabin is ready, would you prefer to step down to it and wait there for your father?"

"No," said she, "I will wait here for my father. I want nothing."

So, with a bow he strode away, and presently Dickory came back. She drew near to him and whispered. "Dickory," she said, "what shall I do? Shall I scream and wave my handkerchief? Perhaps they may see and hear me from the town."

"No," said Dickory, "I would not do that. The night is coming on, and the sky is cloudy. And besides, if you make a noise, those fellows might do something."

"Oh, Dickory, what shall I do?"

"You must wait for your father," he said; "he must be here soon, and the moment you see him, call to him and make him take you to shore. You should both of you get away from this vessel as soon as you can."

For a moment the girl reflected. "Dickory," said she, "I wish you would take a message for me to Master Martin Newcombe. He may be able to get here to me even before my father arrives."

Dickory Charter knew Mr. Newcombe, and he had heard what many people had talked about, that he was courting Major Bonnet's daughter. The day before Dickory would not have cared who the young planter was courting, but this evening, even to his own surprise, he cared very much. He was intensely interested in Kate, and he did not desire to help Martin Newcombe to take an interest in her. Besides, he spoke honestly as he said: "And who would there be to take care of you? No, indeed, I will not leave you."

"Then row to the town," said she, "and have a boat sent for me."

He shook his head. "No," he said, "I will not leave you."

Her eyes flashed. "You should do what you are commanded to do!" and in her excitement she almost forgot to whisper.

He shook his head and left her.

III. The two clocks

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CHAPTER III

THE TWO CLOCKS

IT was already beginning to grow dark. She sat, and she sat; she waited, and she waited; and at last she wept, but very quietly. Her father did not come; Ben Greenway was not there; and even that Charter boy had gone. A man came aft to her; a mild-faced, elderly man, with further offers of refreshment and an invitation to go below out of the night air. But she would have nothing; and as she sadly waited and gently wept, it began to grow truly dark. Presently, as she sat, one arm leaning on the rail, she heard a voice close to her ear, and she gave a great start.

"It is only Dickory," whispered the voice.

Then she put her head near him and was glad enough to have put her arms around his neck.

"I have heard a great deal more," whispered Dickory; "these men are dreadful. They do not know what keeps your father, although they have suspicions which I could not make out; but if he does not come on board by ten o'clock they will sail without him, and without his cash-box."

"And what of me?" she almost cried, "what of me?"

"They will take you with them," said he; "that's the only thing for them to do. But don't be frightened, don't tremble. You must leave this vessel."

"But how?" she said.

"Oh! I will attend to that," he answered, "if you will listen to me and do everything I tell you. We can't go until it is dark, but while it is light enough for you to see things I will show you what you must do. Now, look down over the side of the vessel."

She leaned over and looked down. He was apparently clinging to the side with his head barely reaching the top of the rail.

"Do you see this bit of ledge I am standing on?" he asked. "Could you get out and stand on this, holding to this piece of rope as I do?"

"Yes," said she, "I could do that."

"Then, still holding to the rope, could you lower yourself down from the ledge and hang to it with your hands?"

"And drop into your boat?" said she. "Yes, I could do that."

"No," said he, "not drop into my boat. It would kill you if you fell into the boat. You must drop into the water."

She shuddered, and felt like screaming.

"But it will be easy to drop into the water; you can't hurt yourself, and I shall be there. My boat will be anchored close by, and we can easily reach it."

"Drop into the water!" said poor Kate.

"But I will be there, you know," said Dickory.

She looked down upon the ledge, and then she looked below it to the water, which was idly flapping against the side of the vessel.

"Is it the only way?" said she.

"It is the only way," he answered, speaking very earnestly. "You must not wait for your father; from what I

hear, I fear he has been detained against his will. By nine o'clock it will be dark enough."

"And what must I do?" she said, feeling cold as she spoke.

"Listen to every word," he answered. "This is what you must do. You know the sound of the bell in the tower of the new church?"

"Oh, yes," said she, "I hear it often."

"And you will not confound it with the bell in the old church?"

"Oh, no!" said she; "it is very different, and generally they strike far apart."

"Yes," said he, "the old one strikes first; and when you hear it, it will be quite dark, and you can slip over the rail and stand on this ledge, as I am doing; then keep fast hold of this rope and you can slip farther down and sit on the ledge and wait until the clock of the new church begins to strike nine. Then you must get off the ledge and hang by your two hands. When you hear the last stroke of nine, you must let go and drop. I shall be there."

"But if you shouldn't be there, Dickory? Couldn't you whistle, couldn't you call gently?"

"No," said Dickory; "if I did that, their sharp ears would hear and lanterns would be flashed on us, and perhaps things would be cast down upon us. That would be the quickest way of getting rid of you."

"But, Dickory," she said, after a moment's silence, "it is terrible about my father and Ben Greenway. Why don't they come back? What's the matter with them?"

He hesitated a little before answering.

"From what I heard, I think there is some trouble on shore, and that's the reason why your father has not come for you as soon as he expected. But he thinks you safe with Ben Greenway. Now what we have to do is to get away from this vessel; and then if she sails and leaves your father and Ben Greenway, it will be a good thing. These fellows are rascals, and no honest person should have to do with them. But now I must get out of sight, or somebody will come and spoil everything."

Big Sam did come aft and told Kate he thought she would come to injury sitting out in the night air. But she would not listen to him, and only asked him what time of night it was. He told her that it was not far from nine, and that she would see her father very soon, and then he left her.

"It would have been a terrible thing if he had come at nine," she said to herself. Then she sat very still waiting for the sound of the old clock.

Dickory Charter had not told Miss Kate Bonnet all that he had heard when he was stealthily wandering about the ship. He had slipped down into the chains near a port-hole, on the other side of which Big Sam and the black-haired man were taking supper, and he heard a great deal of talk. Among other things he heard a bit of conversation which, when expurgated of its oaths and unpleasant expressions, was like this:

"You are sure you can trust the men?" said Black-hair.

"Oh, yes!" replied the other, "they're all right."

"Then why don't you go now? At any time officers may be rowing out here to search the vessel."

"And well they might. For what needs an old farmer with an empty vessel, a crew of seventy men, and ten guns? He is in trouble, you may wager your life on that, or he would be coming to see about his girl."

"And what will you do about her?"

"Oh, she'll not be in the way," answered Big Sam with a laugh. "If he doesn't take her off before I sail, that's his business. If I am obliged to leave port without his cash-box, I will marry his daughter and become his son-in-law—I don't doubt we can find a parson among all the rascals on board—then, perhaps, he will think it his duty to send me drafts to the different ports I touch at."

At this good joke, both of them laughed.

"But I don't want to go without his cash-box," continued Big Sam, "and I will wait until high-tide, which will be about ten o'clock. It would be unsafe to miss that, for I must not be here to-morrow morning. But the long-boat will be here soon. I told Roger to wait until half-past nine, and then to come aboard with old Bonnet or without him, if he didn't show himself by that time."

"But, after all," said the black-haired man, "the main thing is, will the men stand by you?"

"You needn't fear them," said the other with an aggravated oath, "I know every rascal of them."

"Now, then," said Dickory Charter to himself as he slipped out of the chains, "she goes overboard, if I have to pitch her over."

Nothing had he heard about Ben Greenway. He did not believe that the Scotchman had deserted his young mistress; even had he been sent for to go on shore in haste,