

***LOUIS
TRACY***



***THE CAPTAIN
OF THE KANSAS***

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The Captain of the Kansas

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The Captain of the Kansas

CHAPTER I
ITEMS NOT IN THE MANIFEST

"I think I shall enjoy this trip," purred Isobel Baring, nestling comfortably among the cushions of her deck chair. A steward was arranging tea for two at a small table. The

Kansas, with placid hum of engines, was speeding evenly through an azure sea.

"I agree with that opinion most heartily, though, to be sure, so much depends on the weather," replied her friend, Elsie Maxwell, rising to pour out the tea. Already the brisk sea-breeze had kissed the Chilean pallor from Elsie's face, which had regained its English peach-bloom. Isobel Baring's complexion was tinged with the warmth of a pomegranate. At sea, even in the blue Pacific, she carried with her the suggestion of a tropical garden.

"I never gave a thought to the weather," purred Isobel again, as she subsided more deeply into the cushions.

"Let us hope such a blissful state of mind may be justified. But you know, dear, we may run into a dreadful gale before we reach the Straits."

Isobel laughed.

"All the better!" she cried. "People tell me I am a most fascinating invalid. I look like a creamy orchid. And what luck to have a chum so disinterested as you where a lot of nice men are concerned! What have I done to deserve it? Because you are really charming, you know."

"Does that mean that you have already discovered a lot of nice men on board?"

Elsie handed her friend a cup of tea and a plate of toast.

"Naturally. While you were mooning over the lights and tints of the Andes, I kept an eye, both eyes in fact, on our compulsory acquaintances of the next three weeks. To begin with, there's the captain."

"He is good-looking, certainly. Somewhat reserved, I fancied."

"Reserved!" Isobel showed all her fine teeth in a smile. Incidentally, she took a satisfactory bite out of a square of toast.

"I 'll soon shake the reserve out of him. He is mine. You will see him play pet dog long before we meet that terrible gale of yours."

"Isobel, you promised your father—"

"To look after my health during the voyage. Do you think that I intend only to sleep, eat, and read novels all the way to London? Then, indeed, I should be ill. But there is a French Comte on the ship. He is mine, too."

"You mean to find safety in numbers?"

"Oh, there are others. Of course, I am sure of my little Count. He twisted his mustache with such an air when I skidded past him in the companionway."

Elsie bent forward to give the chatterer another cup of tea.

"And you promised to read Molière at least two hours daily!" she sighed good-humoredly. Even the most sensible people, and Elsie was very sensible, begin a long voyage with idiotic programs of work to be done.

"I mean to substitute a live Frenchman for a dead one—that is all. And I am sure Monsieur le Comte Edouard de Poincilit will do our French far more good than 'Les Fourberies de Scapin.'"

"Am I to be included in the lessons? And you actually know the man's name already?"

"Read it on his luggage, dear girl. He has such a lot. See if he doesn't wear three different colored shirts for

breakfast, lunch, and tea. And, if *you* refuse to help, who is to take care of le p'tit Edouard while I give the captain a trot round. Don't look cross, there's a darling, though you *do* remind me, when you open your eyes that way, of a delightful little American schoolma'am I met in Lima. She had drifted that far on her holidays, and I believe she was horrified with me."

"Perhaps she thought you were really the dreadful person you made yourself out to be. Now, Isobel, that does not matter a bit in Valparaiso, where you are known, but in Paris and London—"

"Where I mean to be equally well known, it is a passport to smart society to be *un peu risqué*. Steward! Give my compliments to Captain Courtenay, and say that Miss Maxwell and Miss Baring hope he will favor them with his company to tea."

Elsie's bright, eager face flushed slightly. She leaned forward, with a certain squaring of the shoulders, being a determined young person in some respects.

"For once, I shall let you off," she said in a low voice. "So I give you fair warning, Isobel, I must not be included in impromptu invitations of that kind. Next time I shall correct your statement most emphatically."

"Good gracious! I only meant to be polite. Tut, tut! as dad says when he can't swear before ladies, I shan't make the running for you any more."

Elsie drummed an impatient foot on the deck. There was a little pause. Isobel closed her eyes lazily, but she opened them again when she heard her friend say:

"I am sorry if I seem crotchety, dear. Indeed, it is no pretense on my part. You cannot imagine how that man Ventana persecuted me. The mere suggestion of any one's paying me compliments and trying to be fascinating is so repellent that I cringe at the thought. And even our sailor-like captain will think it necessary to play the society clown, I suppose, seeing that we are young and passably good-looking."

Isobel Baring raised her head from the cushions.

"Ventana was a determined wooer, then? What did he do?" she asked.

"He—he pestered me with his attentions. Oh, I should have liked to flog him with a whip!"

"He was always that sort of person—too serious," and the head dropped again.

The steward returned. He was a half-caste; his English was to the point.

"De captin say he busy, he no come," was his message.

Elsie's display of irritation vanished in a merry laugh. Isobel bounced up from the depths of the chair; her dark eyes blazed wrathfully.

"Tell him—" she began.

Then she mastered her annoyance sufficiently to ascertain what it was that Captain Courtenay had actually said, and she received a courteous explanation in Spanish that the commander could not leave the chart-house until the *Kansas* had rounded the low-lying, red-hued Cape Caraumilla, which still barred the ship's path to the south—the first stage of the long voyage from Valparaiso to London.

But pertinacity was a marked trait of the Baring family; otherwise, Isobel's father, a bluff, church-warden type of man, would not have won his way to the chief place in the firm of Baring, Thompson, Miguel & Co., Mining and Export Agents, the leading house in Chile's principal port. Notwithstanding Elsie's previous outburst, the steward was sent back to ask if the ladies might visit the bridge later. Meanwhile, would Captain Courtenay like a cup of tea? All things considered, there was only one possible answer; Captain Courtenay would be charmed if they favored him with both the tea and their company.

"I thought so," cried Isobel, triumphantly. "Come on, Elsie! Let us climb the ladder of conquest. The steward will bring the tea-things.

The chart-house is just splendid. It will provide a refuge when the Count becomes too pressing."

There was a tightening of Elsie's lips to which Isobel paid no heed. The imminent protest was left unspoken, for Courtenay's voice came to them:

"Please hold on by the rail. If a foot were to slip on one of those brass treads the remainder of the day would be a compound of tears and sticking-plaster."

"I think you said 'reserved,'" whispered Isobel to her companion with a wicked little laugh. To Courtenay, peering through a hatch in the hurricane deck, she cried:

"Is the brass rail more dependable than you, captain?"

"It will serve your present purpose, Miss Baring," said he, not taking the hint.

Gathering her skirts daintily in her left hand, Isobel tripped up the steep stairs. Elsie followed. Courtenay, who had the manner and semblance of the first lieutenant of a warship, stood outside a haven of plate glass, shining mahogany, and white paint. The woodwork of the deck was scrubbed until it had the color of new bread. An officer paced the bridge; a sailor, within the chart-house, held the small wheel of the steam steering-gear. Somewhat to Isobel's surprise, neither man seemed to be aware of her presence.

"So this is your den?" she said, throwing her bird-like glance over the bright interior, before she gave the commander a look which was designed to bewitch him instantly. "Surely you don't sleep here, too?"

"Oh, no. This room is the brain of the ship, Miss Baring. We are always wide-awake here. My quarters are farther aft. I think I can find a chair for you if you care to sit down while I have my tea."

The captain led the way to a spacious cabin behind the chart-house.

"I hope you don't mind the chairs being secured to the deck," he said, taking off his hat. "So far above sea line, you know, everything that is loose comes to grief when the ship rolls."

"Then what becomes of your photographs?" demanded Isobel, promptly, her quick eyes having discovered the pictures of two ladies in silver frames on a writing-table.

"I take care to put them away. There is always plenty of warning. No ordinary sea can trouble a big hulk like the *Kansas*."

"Is that your mother, the dear old lady in the lace cap?"

"Yes, and the other is my sister."

"Oh, really! Is she married?"

"No. Like me, she is wedded to her profession."

"Will you think it rude if I ask what that is?"

"She is a hospital nurse; the matron, indeed, of a public institution in the suburbs of London."

"How wonderful! I do admire hospital nurses so much. They are so clever and self-sacrificing, and they always have a smile on their sweet faces. Only dad wouldn't hear of such a thing, I should love to be a nurse myself."

And Isobel sighed, dropped her long eyelashes, and examined the toe of a smart brown shoe with a wistful resignation. Courtenay was politely incredulous, but the arrival of the steward with the replenished tea-tray created a diversion.

"Do let me pour your tea," cried Isobel. "I make lovely tea, don't I, Elsie?"

Elsie laughed so cheerfully that Isobel flashed an interrogatory glance at her. Certainly, the notion of Isobel Baring claiming the domestic virtues was amusing. But Elsie answered at once:

"I know few things that you cannot do admirably, dear."

So Isobel filled a cup, asked if Captain Courtenay took milk and sugar, and said demurely, with a sip of a spoonful:

"Let me see if I can guess your tastes."

Elsie's blue eyes assumed a deeper shade. Men might like that kind of thing, but she felt that her face and neck would be poppy red in another moment. Thus far she had

not addressed a word to Courtenay, though by his manner he had included her in the conversation. She now resolved to break in on the attack which Isobel was beginning with the adroitness of a skilled campaigner. And she, too, could use her eyes to advantage when she chose.

"What a curious library you have, Captain Courtenay," she said, looking, not at him, but at a row of books fitting closely into a small case over the writing-table. Instantly the sailor was interested.

"Why 'curious,' Miss Maxwell?" he asked.

"First, in their assortment; secondly, in the similarity of their binding. I have never before seen the Bible, Walt Whitman, and Dumas in covers exactly alike."

"That is easily explained. They are bound to order. My real trouble was to secure editions of equal size—an essential, you see—otherwise they would not pack into their shelf."

"But what a gathering! Shakespeare, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Montaigne's Essays, Herbert Spencer, *Goethe's Life*, by Lewes, Marcus Aurelius, Martial, Wordsworth, *The Egoist*, Thoreau, Hazlitt, and Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan*! Where have I heard or read of that particular galaxy of stars before?"

"Go on. You are on the right track," cried Courtenay, setting down the teacup and hastening to Elsie's side. She was leaning on the table, reading the titles of the books. The motive of her exclamation was merged now in the fine ardor

of the book-lover. She had an unconscious trick of placing the forefinger of her right hand on her lips when deeply engaged in thought. Elegant as Isobel Baring might be in her studied poses, Elsie need fear no comparison as she examined the contents of the bookcase with eager attention.

"Why the *Vicomte de Bragelonne* only, and not the *Three Musketeers*?" she mused aloud. "And if the *Life of Goethe*, why not his poems, his essays, *Werther*?—Ah, I know—'the crowning offence of *Werther*.' A Stevenson library! Each volume he recommends in 'Books which have influenced men,' I suppose? What a charming idea! I shall never forgive myself for not having thought of it long ago."

Courtenay laughed and blushed like any schoolgirl. Elsie's appreciation had a downright, honest ring in it that went far beyond the platitudes. She accorded him the ready comradeship of a kin soul.

"Many people have been surprised by my collection; you are the first to discover its inspiration," he said.

"That is not strange. There are so few who read. Reading means discerning, interpreting. I am a worshiper of R. L. S., but I have been shocked to find that for a hundred who can talk glibly of his novels there is hardly one who has communed with him in his essays."

"We have actually hit upon a topic that should prove inexhaustible.

Believe me, Miss Maxwell, that is my pet subject. More than once,

needing a listener, I have even lectured my long-suffering

terrier,

Joey, on the point."

Isobel laughed softly. The two standing in front of the bookcase started apart, with a sudden consciousness that they were speaking unguardedly, for Isobel's mirth had mockery in it—"there was a laughing devil in her sneer."

"By the way, where is Joey?" she asked.

The dog answered her question by appearing, with a stretch and a yawn, from beneath a bunk. He had heard his name in Courtenay's voice. That sufficed for Joey at any time.

"What a strange animal!" went on Isobel. "I should have thought that he would bark, or peep out at us, at the least, when we came in."

"Joey had a disturbed night," said Courtenay. "We passed the evening in the Hotel Colon, and he regards South American hotels as the natural dwelling-place of cats, and other bad characters. Here, he is at home, and he knew that I was present."

"Otherwise, he would have classified us as suspicious?"

"He is far too discriminating. What do you say, pup?"

Joey looked up at his master. Apparently, he found the conversation trivial; he yawned again, capaciously.

"You darling! You must have slept with one eye open," said Elsie, stooping to pat him.

"Oh, take care!" cried Isobel. "He may bite you."

"Not he! When you see that wistful look in a dog's eyes, have no fear. He wants to speak then. You won't bite me, will you, dear?" And Elsie sank on one knee, to stroke Joey's white coat; whereupon Joey tried to lick her face.

"Between the Stevenson Library and the captain's dog you are installed as a prime favorite on board the *Kansas*," commented Isobel. The other girl rose hurriedly. She had caught the touch of malice in the smooth voice.

"Captain Courtenay is too polite to remind us that we are intruders," she said lightly. "We forget that he is busy. Joey, candidly canine, did not try to hide his feelings."

Isobel swung her chair round to face the door.

"This is quite the best place in the ship," she said. "I am very comfortable, thank you. Please don't send us away, captain."

Before Courtenay could answer, the officer of the watch looked in.

"Cape Caraumilla bearing sou'west of the Buei Rock, sir," he announced, and vanished again.

"Don't hurry," said Courtenay, taking up his cap. "I must leave you for a few minutes."

He was gone, with Joey at his heels, and there was a brief silence.

"Really, Isobel, we should go back on deck," urged Elsie, uneasily. Already she half regretted the impulse which led her to intervene in her friend's special hobby.

"I like that. I didn't credit you with such guile, Elsie Maxwell. You snap up my nice captain beneath my very nose, and coolly propose that I should vacate the battlefield. Oh dear, no! I can't talk literature, but I *can* flirt, and I have not finished with Arthur yet by a long chalk."

"Isobel, if you knew how you hurt me—"

Miss Baring crossed her pretty feet, folded her arms, and gave her companion a smiling glance.

"So artful, too. 'Love me, love my dog,' eh? You actually took my breath away."

"It may amaze you to learn that I meant to achieve that much, at any rate," was Elsie's quiet retort as she turned to select a volume from the queer miscellany in the bookcase.

"Oh, don't be cruel. Leave me my Frenchman! Say you won't wheedle Edouard by quoting the classics of his native tongue! Poor me! Here have I been warming a serpent in my bosom."

With a *moue* of make-believe anguish Isobel leaned back in her chair. She was insolently conscious of her superior attractions. Was she not the richest heiress in Valparaiso? Had not her father chartered this ship? And was not Elsie even now flying from an unwelcome suitor? She knew full well that her friend would resent the slightest semblance of love-making on the part of any man on board. Already her astonishment at Elsie's unlooked-for vivacity was yielding to the humor of meeting such a rival. The Count might serve as a foil, but the real quarry now was the captain. That very night there would be a moon. And the sea was calm as a sheltered lake. Isobel's lips parted in a delighted smile as she tried to imagine Courtenay deserting her to discuss those celebrities whom Elsie had made the most of. And how she would play off the Count against the captain! They ought to be at daggers drawn long before the Straits of Magellan were reached. Certainly she never expected such sport on board such a humdrum ship as the *Kansas*.

Suddenly they both heard an excited bark from the dog, and the quick rush of feet along the deck; Courtenay's voice reached them with a new and startling note in it.

"Stop that!" he shouted.

There was an instant's pause. Their alert ears caught the sounds of a distant scuffle. Then a pistol shot jarred the peaceful drone of the ship.

"Sheer off, there!" roared Courtenay again. "Next time I shoot to kill!"—

With terror in their eyes, with blanched cheeks, they rushed to the door and peeped out. Courtenay was not to be seen, but the officer of the watch was swinging himself over the canvas shield of the bridge. He disappeared. Joey, barking furiously, trotted into view and ran back again. Creeping forward, they saw the stolid sailor within the chart-house squint at the compass and give the wheel a slight turn. That was reassuring. Yet another timorous pace, and through the curving window they could discern Courtenay, holding a revolver in his right hand, but behind his back.

Even in their alarm they realized that nothing very terrible would happen now. But why had the shot been fired, and what had given that tense ring to Courtenay's threat?

Venturing a little further, they gained the bridge. On the main deck, a long way beneath, near an open hatch, a half-caste Chilean was lying on his back. He had evidently been wounded. Blood was flowing from his leg; it smeared the white deck. The officer who had climbed down so speedily from the bridge was directing two other men how to lift him. Close by, the chief officer, Mr. Boyle, was stanching a deep cut on his chin with a handkerchief. At the same time he curtly ordered off such deck hands and stewards as came running forward, attracted by the disturbance.

The girls were gazing wide-eyed at this somewhat unnerving scene, when Courtenay approached.

"Better go below," he said quietly. "I am sorry this trouble should have happened, at the beginning of the voyage, too. I hope it will not upset you. That rascally Chilean tried to knife Mr. Boyle, and those other blackguards were ready to side with him. I had to shoot quick and straight to show them I meant what I said."

"Is he dead?" asked Isobel, with a contemptuous coolness as to the fate of the mutineer which Courtenay found admirable.

"Not a bit of it. Fired at his legs. Only a flesh wound, I fancy."

"Poor wretch!" murmured Elsie. "Was there no other way?"

"There is only one way of dealing with that sort of skunk," was the gruff answer. The pity in her voice implied a condemnation of his act. He resented it. He knew he had done rightly, and she knew that she had given offence by her involuntary sympathy with the suffering Chilean, who, with the passing of the paralyzing shock of the bullet, was howling dolefully now as the sailors carried him towards the forecastle.

The man's groans tortured her. Her eyes filled with tears. Joey, yelping with frenzy, leaped up to invite her to lift him above the canvas screen so that he might see what was going on. But Elsie could only reach blindly for the rail of the companion-way, and Isobel, after a smiling word of farewell to Courtenay, followed her.

So it came to pass that neither Stevenson nor the moon had power to draw the captain of the *Kansas* to the promenade deck that night.

CHAPTER II

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WHEREIN THE CAPTAIN KEEPS TO HIS OWN QUARTERS

Doctor Christobal brought some additional details to the dinner-table. He was not the ship's doctor. The *Kansas*, built for freight rather than passengers, did not carry a surgeon on her roll; Dr. Christobal's presence was due to Mr. Baring's solicitude in his daughter's behalf. It chanced that the courtly and gray-haired Spanish physician had relinquished his practise in Chile, and was about to pay a long-promised visit to a married daughter in Barcelona. Friendship, not unaided by a good fee, induced him to travel by the *Kansas*.

He had been called on to attend Mr. Boyle and the wounded Chilean, and he reported now that the chief officer's injury was trifling, but the Chilean's wound might incapacitate him during the remainder of the voyage.

"So far as I can gather," he said, "Mr. Boyle had a narrow escape. These half-breeds have a nice anatomical knowledge of the situation of the lung; they also know the easiest way to reach it with a sharp instrument. Captain Courtenay fired as the knife fell, otherwise our first mate would have attended his own funeral this evening."

"What was the cause of the affair?" Isobel asked.

"The man is not one of the ship's crew, I understand. His name is Frascuelo, and it appears that he was engaged to place some bunker coal aboard early this morning. He says that he was drugged, and his clothes stolen; that he came off to the ship at a late hour, and that some one flung him headlong into a hold which, luckily for him, was nearly full of cotton bales. He was stunned by the fall, and were it not for Captain Courtenay's custom of having all hatches taken off and a thorough examination of the cargo made before the holds are finally battened down for the voyage, Frascuelo might now be in a tight place in more than one sense."

Dr. Christobal was proud of his idiomatic English. He spoke the language with the careless freedom of a Londoner.

"Frascuelo seems to have passed an eventful day," said the little French Comte, who had been waiting anxiously for a chance to join in the conversation.

"But why should he want to kill poor Mr. Boyle?" inquired Isobel, after giving the Frenchman an encouraging glance. Incidentally, she smiled at Elsie. "Why puzzle one's brains over foreign tongues when all the world speaks English?" she telegraphed.

"Mr. Boyle is a peculiar person," said the doctor dryly. "I happen to have known him during some years. You and I might regard him as a man of few words, but he has acquired a wonderful vocabulary for the benefit of sailors. I believe he can swear in every known lingo. His accomplishment in that direction no doubt annoyed Frascuelo, who became frantic when he heard that the ship would not call at any South American port. I imagine, too,

that the unfortunate fellow is still suffering from the drug which, he says, was administered to him. Anyhow, you know how the affair terminated."

"I, for one, think some consideration might have been shown him," said Elsie.

"There is no time for argument when a Chilean draws a knife, Miss Maxwell."

"But, if his story is true—"

"There never yet was a stowaway who did not invent a plausible yarn. Nevertheless, I believe, and Mr. Boyle agrees with me, that the man is not lying."

They felt the ship swing round on a new course, and the rays of the setting sun lit up the saloon table through the open starboard ports.

"Due south now, ladies!" cried Dr. Christobal cheerily. "We have rounded Cape Cardones. We practically follow the seventy-sixth degree until we approach Evangelistas Island. Thus far we are in the open sea. Then we pick our way through the Straits discovered by that daring Portuguese, Fernando de Magallanes, to whose memory I always drink heartily once we are clear of the Cape of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. I never pass through that gloomy defile without marveling at his courage, and thinking that he deserved a better fate than murder at the hands of some painted savage in the Philippines. Peace be to his ashes!"

And the doctor lifted his glass of red wine with a quasi-masonic ritual which lent solemnity to his discourse.

"You are a long way ahead of your toast," said Isobel.

"Just as Magellan was ahead of his times," was the rejoinder.

"Yet he was a man of leisurely habit," put in Elsie, who found Dr.

Christobal's old-world manners full of charm and repose.

"How so?" said he, puzzled, for the worthy Portuguese navigator was notoriously a swashbuckler.

"Otherwise he never could have christened any unhappy promontory by such a long-winded name," she explained.

"Perhaps he met a contrary wind in that region," said Christobal, laughing. "Monsieur de Poincilit here, were he in a very bad temper, might exclaim, 'Mille diables!' Why should not our excellent Fernando rail against the almost inconceivable fickleness which could be displayed by eleven times as many young ladies?"

"I came out last time on the *Orellana*, and I don't even remember passing such a place," said Isobel. She was a Chilean born and bred, but she always affected European vagueness as to the topography of South America. Dr. Christobal knew this weakness of hers; he also remembered her beautiful half-caste mother, from whom Isobel inherited her flashing eyes, her purple-red lips, and a skin in which the exquisite flush of terra-cotta on her cheeks merged into the delicate pallor of forehead and neck.

But, being a tactful man, he only answered: "Your English sailors, my dear, who gruffly dubbed the adjacent point 'Cape Dungeness,' have shortened Magellan's mouthful into 'Cape Virgins.'—Yet, Ursula was a British saint, and her memory ought to be revered, if only because it keeps alive a classic pun."

A born raconteur, he paused.

"Go right ahead, doctor," came a voice from the lower end of the table.

"Well, the story runs that Princess Ursula fled from Britain to Rome to escape marriage with a pagan—"

"How odd!" interrupted Isobel, and Elsie alone understood the drift of her comment.

"Not at all odd if she didn't happen to like him," said Christobal. "She reached Cologne, and was martyred there by the Huns. Long afterwards a stone was found with the inscription *Ursula et Undecimilla Virgines*, which was incorrectly translated into 'Ursula and her Eleven Thousand Virgins.' Some later critic pointed out that a missing comma after Undecimilla, the name of a handmaid, made all the difference, assuming that two young ladies were a more reasonable and probable number than eleven thousand. But what legend ever cared for a comma, or reached a full stop? If you go to Cologne, the verger of the Church of St. Ursula will show you the bones of the whole party in glass cases, and, equally amazing, the town of Baoza in Spain claims to be the birthplace of the lot. Clearly, Magellan had a man from Baoza on board his ship."

"All mail steamers ought to provide a lecturer on things in general and interesting places passed in particular," said Isobel.

Dr. Christobal bowed.

"I am sure that some of the officers of the *Orellana* could have told you the history of Cape Virgins, but they, not to mention the other young gentlemen in the passenger list,

would certainly find you better sport than puzzling your pretty head about the ship's landmarks."

"I also came out on the *Orellana*, but there was no Miss Baring to be seen," murmured the Frenchman.

"You had a dull trip, I take it?" said the doctor, quietly.

"I was very ill," was the response; but, after a stare of surprise, he joined in the resultant laugh quite good-naturedly.

"It is a standing joke that my countrymen are poor sailors," he protested, "and that is strange, don't you think, seeing that France has the second largest navy in the world?"

"Console yourself, monsieur," said Christobal. "Three great sea-captains, Nelson, Cook, and, it is said, Columbus himself, always paid tribute to Neptune. And, if I am not mistaken," he added, glancing through the port windows, "we shall all have our stamina tested before twenty-four hours have passed."

Heads were turned and necks craned to see what had induced this unexpected prophecy. Behind the distant coastline the inner giants of the Andes threw heavenward their rugged outlines, with many a peak and glacier glinting in vivid colors against a sky so clear and blue that they seemed strangely near.

"Yes, this wonderful atmosphere of ours is enchanting," said the doctor, when assailed by a chorus of doubts. "But it carries its deceptive smiles too far. The very beauty of the Cordillera is a sign of storm. I am sorry to be a croaker; yet we are running into a gale."

"I shall ask the captain," pouted Isobel, rising.

The Count twisted his mustache. He knew that both ladies were in the forbidden territory of the bridge when the fracas occurred.

"You, perhaps, are a good sailor?" said he, addressing Elsie.

"I am afraid to boast," she answered. "I have been in what was called a Number Eight gale, whatever that may mean, and weathered it splendidly, but I am older now."

"It cannot have been long ago, seeing that you recall it so exactly."

"It was six years ago, and I was seventeen then," said Elsie, her eyes wandering to the purple and gold of the far-off mountains.

"But you are English. You are therefore at home on the rolling deep," murmured Monsieur de Poincilit, confidentially. She did not endeavor to interpret his expressive glance, though he seemed to convey more than he said.

"Not so much at home at sea as you are in my language," she replied, and she turned to Dr. Christobal, whom she had already known slightly in Valparaiso.

"Are you coming on deck?" she inquired. "I am sure you are a mine of information on Chile, and I want to extract some of the ore while the land is still visible. It is already assuming the semblance of a dream."

"You are not saying a last farewell to Valparaiso, I hope?" said her elderly companion, as they quitted the salon.

"I think so. I have no ties there, save those of sentiment. I shall not return, unless, if a doubtful fortune permits, I am able some day to revisit two graves which are dear to me."

There was a little catch in her voice, and the doctor was far too sympathetic to endeavor forthwith to divert her sad thoughts.

"I knew your father," he said gently. "He was a most admirable man, but quite unsuited to the environment of a new country, where the dollar is god, and an unstable deity at that. He was swindled outrageously by men who stand high in the community to-day. But you, Miss Maxwell, with your knowledge of Spanish and your other acquirements, should do better here than in Europe, provided, that is, you mean to earn your own living."

"I am proud to hear you speak well of my father," she said. "And I am well aware that he was badly treated in business. I fear, too, that his advocacy of the rights of the Indians brought him into disfavor. Of all his possessions the only remnant left to me is a barren mountain, with a slice of fertile valley, in the Quillota district. It yields me the magnificent revenue of two hundred dollars per annum."

"How in the world did he come to own land there?"

"It was a gift from the Naquilla tribe. He defeated an attempt made to oust them by a big land company. The company has since asked me to sell the property, and offered me a fair price, too, as the cultivable land is a very small strip, but it would be almost like betraying the cause for which he fought, would it not?"

"Yes, indeed," agreed the doctor, though his heart and not his head dictated the reply. "May I ask you to tell me your plans for the future?" he went on.

"Well, when Mr. Baring heard I was going to England, he was good enough to promise me employment in his London

agency as Spanish correspondent. That will fill in two days a week. The rest I can devote to art. I paint a little, and draw with sufficient promise to warrant study, I am told. Anyhow, I am weary of teaching; I prefer to be a pupil."

"I cannot imagine what the young men of Valparaiso were thinking of to allow a girl like you to slip off in this fashion," said Christobal with a smile.

"Most of them hold firmly to the belief that a wife's wedding-dress should be made of gilt-edged scrip."

"Poor material—very poor material out of which to construct wedded happiness. And as to my young friend, Isobel? She joins her aunt in London, I hear?"

"That is the present arrangement. She means to have a good time, especially in Paris. I should like to live in Paris myself. Dear old smoke-laden London does not appeal so thoroughly to the artist. Yet, I am content—yes, quite content."

"Then you have gained the best thing in the world," cried the doctor, throwing out his arms expansively.

The two became good friends as the voyage progressed. Christobal was exceedingly well informed, and delighted in a thoughtful listener like Elsie. Isobel, tiring at times of the Count, would join in their conversation, and display a spasmodic interest in the topics they discussed. There were only six other passengers, a Baptist missionary and his wife, three mining engineers, and an English globe-trotter, a singular being who appeared to have roamed the entire earth, but whose experiences were summed up in two words—every place he had seen was either "Fair" or "Rotten."