

the board! Fancy me, of all men, being willing to barter my child for a few pieces of gold!"

The thought was maddening. For a little while he yielded to utter despondency. It was quite true that a comparatively small amount of money would restore the stability of his firm. Even without it, were his credit unimpaired, he could easily tide over the period of depression until the first fruits of his enterprise were garnered. Then all men would hail him as a genius.

Wearily turning over his papers, he suddenly came across the last letter written to him by Iris' mother. How she doted on their only child! He recalled one night shortly before his wife died when the little Iris was brought into her room to kiss her and hush her infantile prayers. She had devised a formula of her own:

"God bless father! God bless mother! God bless me, their little girl!"

And what was it she cried to him from the beach?

"Your own little girl given back to you!"

Given back to him! For what—to marry that black hearted scoundrel whose pastime was the degradation of women and the defaming of honest men? That settled it. Instantly the cloud was lifted from his soul. A great peace came upon him. The ruin of his business he might not be able to avert, but he would save from the wreck that which he prized more than all else, his daughter's love.

The engines dropped to half speed. They were entering the harbor of Singapore. In a few hours the worst would be over. If Ventnor telegraphed to London his withdrawal from the board nothing short of a cabled draft for £10,000 would prevent certain creditors from filing a bankruptcy petition. In the local banks the baronet had about a thousand to his credit. Surely among the rich merchants of the port, men who knew the potentialities of his scheme, he would be able to raise the money needed. He would try hard. Already he felt braver. The old fire had returned to his blood. The very belief that he was acting in the way best calculated to secure his daughter's happiness stimulated and encouraged him.

He went on deck, to meet Iris skipping down the hatchway. "Oh, there you are!" she cried. "I was just coming to find out why you were moping in your cabin. You are missing the most beautiful view—all greens and blues and browns! Run, quick! I want you to see every inch of it."

She held out her hand and pulled him gleefully up the steps. Leaning against the taffrail, some distance apart from each other, were Anstruther and Lord Ventnor. Need it be said to whom Iris drew her father?

"Here he is, Robert," she laughed. "I do believe he was sulking because Captain Fitzroy was so very attentive to me. Yet you didn't mind it a bit!"

The two men looked into each other's eyes. They smiled. How could they resist the contagion of her sunny nature?

"I have been thinking over what you said to me just now, Anstruther," said the shipowner slowly.

"Oh!" cried Iris. "Have you two been talking secrets behind my back?"

"It is no secret to you, my little girl!" Her father's voice lingered on the phrase. "When we are on shore, Robert, I will explain matters to you more fully. Just now I wish only to tell you that where Iris has given her heart, I will not refuse her hand."

She took his face between her hands and kissed him. Lord Ventnor, wondering at this effusiveness, strolled forward.

"What has happened, Miss Deane?" he inquired. "Have you just discovered what an excellent parent you possess?"

The baronet laughed almost hysterically. "Pon my honor," he cried, "you could not have hit upon a happier explanation."

His lordship was not quite satisfied. "I suppose you will take Iris to Smith's hotel?" he said, with cool impudence.

Iris answered him.

"Yes. My father has just asked Robert to come with us—by inference, that is. Where are you going?"

The adroit use of her lover's Christian name goaded his lordship to sudden heat.

"Indeed!" he snarled. "Sir Arthur Deane has evidently decided a good many things during the last hour."

"Yes," was the shipowner's quiet retort. "I have decided that my daughter's happiness should be the chief consideration of my remaining years. All else must give way to it."

The earl's swarthy face grew sallow with fury. His eyes blazed, and there was a tense vibrato in his voice as he said:

"Then I must congratulate you, Miss Deane. You are fated to endure adventures. Having escaped from the melodramatic perils of Rainbow Island you are destined to experience another variety of shipwreck here."

He left them. Not a word had Robert spoken throughout the unexpected scene. His heart was throbbing with a tremendous joy, and his lordship's sneers were lost on him. But he could not fail to note the malignant purpose of the parting sentence.

In his quietly masterful way he placed his hand on the baronet's shoulder.

"What did Lord Ventnor mean?" he asked.

Sir Arthur Deane answered, with a calm smile: "It is difficult to talk openly at this moment. Wait until we reach the hotel."

The news flew fast through the settlement that her majesty's ship Orient had returned from her long search for the Sirdar. The warship occupied her usual anchorage, and a boat was lowered to take off the passengers.

The boat swung out into the tideway. Her progress shoreward was watched by a small knot of people, mostly loungers and coolies. Among them, however, were two persons who had driven rapidly to the landing place when the arrival of the Orient was reported. One bore all the distinguishing marks of the army officer of high rank, but the other was unmistakably a globe trotter. The older gentleman made no pretense that he could "hear the east-a-calling." He swore impartially at the climate, the place and its inhabitants. At this instant he was in a state of wild excitement. He was very tall, very stout, exceedingly red faced.

Producing a tremendous telescope he vainly endeavored to balance it on the shoulder of a native servant.

"Can't you stand still, you blithering idiot," he shouted, after futile attempts to focus the advancing boat, "or shall I steady you with a clout over the ear?"

His companion, the army man, was looking through a pair of field glasses. "By Jove," he cried, "I can see Sir Arthur Deane and a girl who looks like his daughter! There's that infernal scamp, Ventnor, too."

The big man brushed the servant out of his way and brandished the telescope as though it were a bludgeon.

"The dirty beggar! He drove my lad to misery and death, yet he has come back safe and sound. Wait till I meet him, I'll!"

"Now, Anstruther! Remember your promise. I will deal with Lord Ventnor. My vengeance has first claim. What! By the jumping Moses, I do believe—Yes, it is Anstruther! Your nephew is sitting next to the girl!"

The telescope fell on the stones with a crash. The giant's rubicund face suddenly blanched. He leaned on his friend for support.

"You are not mistaken?" he almost whimpered. "Look again, for God's sake, man! Make sure before you speak. Tell me! Tell me!"

"Calm yourself, Anstruther. It is Robert, as sure as I'm alive. Don't you think I know him, my poor disgraced friend, whom I, like the rest, cast off in his hour of trouble? But I had some excuse. There! I didn't mean that, old fellow. Robert himself will be the last man to blame either of us. Who could have suspected that two people—one of them, God help me, my wife—would concoct such a hellish plot!"

The boat glided gracefully alongside the steps of the quay, and Playdon sprang gracefully ashore to help Iris to alight. What happened immediately afterward can best be told in his own words, as he related the story to an appreciative audience in the ward-room.

"We had just landed," he said, "and some of the crew were pushing the coolies out of the way when two men jumped down the steps, and a most fiendish row sprang up—that is, there was no dispute or wrangling, but one chap, who, it turned out, was Colonel Costobell, grabbed Ventnor by the shirt front and threatened to smash his face in if he didn't listen then and there to what he had to say. I really thought about interfering until I heard Colonel Costobell's opening words. After that I would gladly have seen the beggar chucked into the harbor. We never liked him, did we?"

"Ask no questions, Pompey, but go ahead with the yarn," growled the first lieutenant.

"Well, it seems that Mrs. Costobell is dead. She got enteric a week after the Orient sailed and was a goner in four days. Before she died she owned up."

He paused, with a base eye to effect. Not a man moved a muscle.

"All right," he cried. "I will make no more false starts. Mrs. Costobell begged her husband's forgiveness for her treatment of him and confessed that she and Lord Ventnor planned the affair for which Anstruther was tried by court martial. It must have been a beastly business, for Costobell was sweating with rage, though his words were icy enough. And you ought to have seen Ventnor's face when he heard of the depositions, sworn to and signed by Mrs. Costobell and by several Chinese servants whom he bribed to give false evidence. He promised to marry Mrs. Costobell if her husband died, or, in any event, to bring about a divorce when the Hongkong affair had blown over. Then she learned that he was after Miss Iris, and there is no doubt her fury helped on the fever. Costobell said that, for his wife's sake, he would have kept the wretched thing secret, but he was compelled to clear Anstruther's name, especially as he came across the other old Johnnie—"

"Pompey, you are incoherent with excitement. Who is the other old Johnnie?" asked the first lieutenant severely.

"Didn't I tell you? Why, Anstruther's uncle, of course, a heavy old swell with just a touch of Yorkshire in his tongue. I gathered that he disinherited his nephew when the news of the court martial reached him. Then he relented and cabled to him. Getting no news, he came east to look for him. He met Costobell the day after the lady died, and the two vowed to be revenged on Ventnor and to clear Anstruther's character, living or dead. Poor old chap! He cried like a baby when he asked the youngster to forgive him. It was quite touching."

"Well, Costobell shook Ventnor off at last, with the final observation that Anstruther's court martial has been quashed. The next batch of general orders will reinstate him in the regiment, and it rests with him to decide whether or not a criminal warrant shall be issued against his lordship for conspiracy."

"What did Miss Deane do?"

"Clung to Anstruther like a weeping angel and kissed everybody all round when Ventnor got away. Well—hands off. I mean her father, Anstruther and

the stout uncle. Fortunately I was not on in that scene. But for some reason they all nearly wrung my arm off, and the men were so excited that they gave the party a rousing cheer as their rickshaws went off in a bunch."

The next commotion arose in the hotel when Sir Arthur Deane seized the first opportunity to explain the predicament in which his company was placed and the blow which Lord Ventnor yet had it in his power to deal.

Mr. William Anstruther was an interested auditor. Robert would have spoken, but his uncle restrained him.

"Leave this to me, lad," he exclaimed. "When I was coming here in the Sirdar there was a lot of talk about Sir Arthur's scheme, and there should not be much difficulty in raising all the brass required if half what I heard be true. Sit you down, Sir Arthur, and tell us all about it."

The shipowner required no second bidding. With the skill for which he was noted he described his operations in detail, telling how every farthing of the first installments of the two great loans was paid up, how the earnings of his fleet would quickly overtake the deficit in capital value caused by the loss of the three ships and how in six months' time the leading financial houses of London, Paris and Berlin would be offering him more money than he would need.

To a shrewd man of business the project could not fail to commend itself, and the Yorkshire squire, though a trifle obstinate in temper, was singularly clear headed in other respects. He brought his great fist down on the table with a whack.

"Send a cable to your company, Sir Arthur," he cried, "and tell them that your prospective son-in-law will provide the £10,000 you require. I will see that his draft is honored. You can add, if you like, that another ten will be ready if wanted when this lot is spent. I did my lad one deuced bad turn in my life. This time, I think, I am doing him a good one."

"You are, indeed," said Iris' father enthusiastically. "The unallotted capital he is taking up will be worth four times its face value in two years."

"All the more reason to make his holding twenty instead of ten," roared the Yorkshireman. "But, look here. You talk about dropping proceedings against that precious earl whom I saw today. Why not tell him not to try any funny tricks until Robert's money is safely lodged to your account? We have him in our power. Dash it all, let us use him a bit."

Even Iris laughed at this naive suggestion. It was delightful to think that their arch enemy was actually helping the baronet's affairs at that very moment and would continue to do so until he was flung aside as being of no further value. Although Ventnor himself had carefully avoided any formal commitment, the cablegrams awaiting the shipowner at Singapore showed that confidence had already been restored by the uncontradicted use of his lordship's name.

Robert at last obtained a hearing. "You two are quietly assuming the attitude of the financial magnates of this gathering," he said. "I must admit that you have managed things very well between you, and I do not propose for one moment to interfere with your arrangements. Nevertheless, Iris and I are really the chief moneyed persons present. You spoke of financial houses in England and on the continent backing up your loans six months hence, Sir Arthur. You need not go to them. We will be your bankers."

The baronet laughed with a whole hearted gaiety that revealed whence Iris got some part at least of her bright disposition.

"Will you sell your island, Robert?" he cried. "I am afraid that not even Iris could wheedle any one into buying it."

"But, father, dear," interrupted the girl earnestly, "what Robert says is true. We have a gold mine there. It is worth so much that you will hardly believe it until there can no longer be any doubt in your mind. I suppose that is why Robert asked me not to mention his discovery to you earlier."

"No, Iris, that was not the reason," said her lover, and the elder men felt that more than idle fancy inspired the astounding intelligence that they had just heard. "Your love was more to me than all the gold in the world. I had won you. I meant to keep you, but I refused to buy you."

He turned to her father. His pent-up emotion mastered him, and he spoke as one who could no longer restrain his feelings.

"I have had no chance to thank you for the words you uttered at the moment we quitted the ship. Yet I will treasure them while life lasts. You gave Iris to me when I was poor, disgraced, an outcast from my family and my profession. And I know why you did this thing. It was because you valued her happiness more than riches or reputation. I am sorry now I did not explain matters earlier. It would have saved you much needless suffering. But the sorrow has sped like an evil dream, and you will perhaps not regret it, for your action today binds me to you with hoops of steel. And you, too, uncle. You traveled thousands of miles to help and comfort me in my anguish. Were I as bad as I was painted your kind old heart still pitied me. You were prepared to pluck me from the depths of despair and degradation. Why should I hate Lord Ventnor? What man could have served me as he did? He has given me Iris. He gained for me at her father's hands a concession such as mortal has seldom wrested from black browed fate. He brought my uncle to my side in the hour of my adversity. Hate him! I would have his statue carved in marble and set on high to tell all who passed how good may spring out of evil—how God's

wisdom can manifest itself by putting even the creeping and crawling things of the earth to some useful purpose."

"Dash it all, lad," vociferated the elder Anstruther, "what ails thee? I never heard you talk like this before?"

The old gentleman's amazement was so comical that further tension was out of the question.

Robert, in calmer mood, informed them of the manner in which he hit upon the mine. The story sounded like wildest romance—this finding of a volcanic dyke guarded by the bones of "J. S." and the poison filled quarry—but the production of the ore samples changed wonder into certainty.

Next day a government metallurgist estimated the value of the contents of the two oil tins at about £500, yet the specimens brought from the island were not by any means the richest available.

And now there is not much more to tell of Rainbow Island and its castaways. On the day that Captain Robert Anstruther's name appeared in the Gazette, reinstating him to his



"Sweetheart," said her husband.

rank and regiment. Iris and he were married in the English church at Hongkong, for it was his wife's wish that the place which witnessed his ignominy should also witness his triumph.

Soon afterward Robert resigned his commission. He regretted the necessity, but the demands of his new sphere in life rendered this step imperative. Mining engineers, laborers, stores, portable houses, engines and equipment were obtained with all haste, and the whole party sailed on one of Sir Arthur Deane's ships to convey a small steamer specially hired to attend to the wants of the miners.

At last, one evening early in July, the two vessels anchored outside Palm Tree rock, and Mir Jan could be seen running frantically about the shore, for no valid reason save that he could not stand still. The sailor brought him good news. The governor of Hongkong felt that any reasonable request made by Anstruther should be granted if possible. He had written such a strong representation of the Mohammedan's case to the government of India that there was little doubt the returning mail would convey an official notification that Mir Jan had been granted a free pardon.

The mining experts verified Robert's most sanguine views after a very brief examination of the deposit. Hardly any preliminary work was needed. In twenty-four hours a small concentrating plant was erected and a ditch made to drain off the carbonic anhydride in the valley. After dusk a party of coolies cleared the quarry of its former occupants. Toward the close of the following day, when the great steamer once more slowly turned her head to the northwest, Iris could hear the steady thud of an engine at work on the first consignment of ore.

Robert had been busy up to the last moment. There was so much to be done in a short space of time. The vessel carried a large number of passengers, and he did not wish to detain them too long, though they one and all expressed their willingness to suit his convenience in this respect.

Now his share of the necessary preparations was concluded. His wife, Sir Arthur and his uncle were gathered in a corner of the promenade deck when he approached and told them that his last instruction ashore was for a light to be fixed on Summit rock as soon as the dynamo was in working order.

"When we all come back in the cold weather," he explained gleefully, "we will not imitate the Sirdar by running on to the reef should we arrive by night."

Iris answered not. Her blue eyes were fixed on the fast receding cliffs.

"Sweetheart," said her husband, "why are you so silent?"

She turned to him. The light of the setting sun illumined her face with its golden radiance.

"Because I am so happy," she said. "Oh, Robert, dear, so happy and thankful!"

THE END.

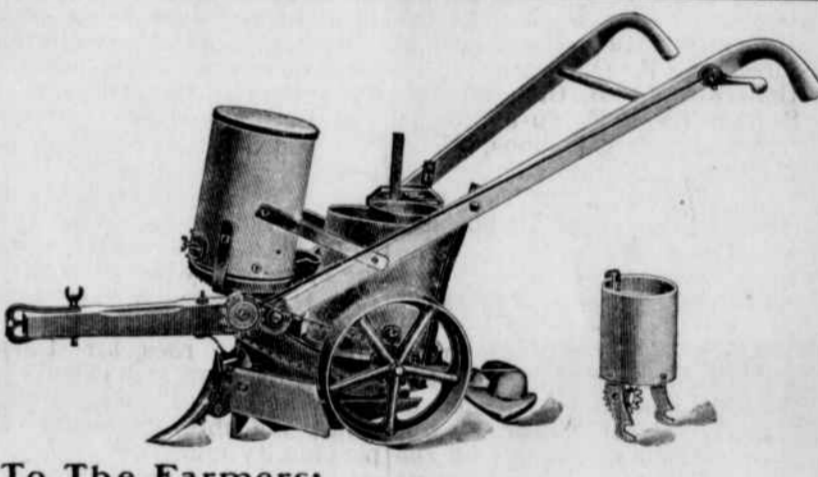
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