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Rev. E. E. Williamson, of Charlotte, has been appointed pastor of the Central Methodist church at Shelby to succeed Rev. C. F. Sherrill, who recently resigned on account of throat trouble and has moved to Charlotte to engage in the insurance business.

The
Stowaway

By LOUIS TRACY,
Author of the "Pillar of Light," "The Wings of the Morning" and "The Captain of the Kansas."

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Overhearing a conspiracy between her uncle and the captain of his ship to sink the vessel and collect insurance, Iris Yorke secretes herself aboard the Andromeda just before it sails for southern seas. Her uncle, who is her guardian and has commanded her to wed old Dickey Bulmer, thinks she has run away to avoid the distasteful marriage. II.—Philip Hozier, young and handsome second officer of the Andromeda, discovers Miss Yorke aboard. III.—Iris tells Hozier of the plot to sink the vessel, and he keeps watch on Captain Coke. Mysterious defect in the steering gear discovered, causing the ship to veer from her course, Coke treats the matter lightly. IV. While putting into a harbor at an unknown island the Andromeda suddenly is shelled by a mysterious foe on shore. V.—Shots wreck ship. Hozier is wounded and his life saved by Iris. VI.—Survivors are hauled up on a cliff by ropes let down by a party of refugees, the leader proving to be Dom Corria de Silva, deposed president of Brazil.

CHAPTER VIII.
CROSS PURPOSES.

THOUGH Iris gave such warlike counsel, it would be doing her a grave injustice to assume that her gentle disposition was changed because of the days' sufferings. The erstwhile light hearted schoolgirl and youthful mistress of her uncle's house had been subjected to dynamic influences. The ordeal through which she had passed, unscathed bodily, but seared in spirit, had left her strung to a tense pitch. Of course in this present clash of emotions Iris little understood what her advice really meant. She was appealing to heaven rather than to the force of arms. Oddly enough, the only professional soldier present condemned her project roundly when it was mooted. "In leaving the island tonight you are acting on an assumption," protested Captain San Benavides to his chief. "You cannot be sure that the Andros-y-Meia will not appear. The arrangement is that she is to send a boat here soon after midnight, yet if this mad scheme of an attack on armed troops by unarmed men is persisted in we must begin to ferry to the island long before that hour. In all probability we shall be discovered at once. At the very moment that our friends are eagerly awaiting us on board the ship we may be lying dead on the island. The notion is preposterous. Be guided by me, Dom Corria, and decline to have anything to do with it. Better still, let these English bores promise to forget that we are alive. Then Marcel can guide them to the landing place, where they will be shot speedily and comfortably. There is no sense in sacrificing the girl. She must be kept here on some pretext." The ex-president took thought before he answered. "I fear we must fall in with our allies' views, faute de mieux. You and I have to lead a headstrong army. That little Hercules of a commander is stubborn as a mule—a mule that has the strength and courage of a wild boar. The younger man thinks only of the girl's safety. He, at least, will not consent to leave her. Both, backed by their crew, will not scruple to sacrifice us if their interests point that way. Trust me to twist them into the course that shall best serve our own needs. I am now going to tell them that you approve of their plan." The long day wore slowly. The heat was intense. Even the hardened sailors soon found that if the atmosphere of the cavern were to remain endurable they might not smoke. So pipes were extinguished. Unhappily Iris answered in French some simple query of the dapper officer's. Thenceforth, to her great bewilderment and Hozier's manifest annoyance, he pestered her with compliments and inquiries. To avoid both she expressed a longing for sleep. When she awoke the ravine was in shadow and the interior of the cave was dark. Her first conscious sensation was that of almost intolerable thirst. Nevertheless she cried involuntarily for water, and again she was offered wine. She managed to smile in a strained fashion at this malicious humor of fortune. Hozier, who had aroused her by touching her shoulder, fancied he saw the gleam of merriment in her face. "If there is no hitch in our plans," he said, "we should be on the island within five hours. We have every-

thing thought out as far as may be in view of the unknown. At any rate, Miss Yorke, if we succeed in getting you safely ashore you personally will have but slight cause for further anxiety. The proposal is that Marcel shall take you at once to the hut of an old convict whom he can trust—" "A convict?" she gasped. "The population of Fernando Noronha is almost entirely made of convicts and soldiers," he explained. "But am I to be left there alone?" "What else is there to be done? You cannot join in the attack on a fort, and that offers our only chance. It would seem granted an effective surprise, we may carry it. Then your guardian will bring you to us." "What if you fail?" "We must not fail," he said quietly. "Please do not ride the alternative from me," she pleaded. "I have endured so much." "Well, don't you see, this man—who, by the way, is married and has a daughter, aged fourteen—will, if necessary, reveal your presence to the governor. By that time, say in a day or two, the excitement will have died down, the news of your escape will be cabied to Eugenio, you will be sent to the coast on the government steamer, and you can travel home by the next mail." "That sounds very simple—and European," she said, and the pathetic sarcasm was not lost on him. Hozier was deputed to obtain the girl's consent to the proposal he had already put before her. He feared that she would refuse compliance, for he understood her fine temper better than the others. He was a young man—one but little versed in the ways of women—yet some instinct warned him that there was a nobility in Iris Yorke's nature that might set itself at naught and urge her to share her companions' lot even though certain death were the outcome. They passed together through the cavern. Watts, sound asleep, was lying there. The majority of the men were seated on the rocks without or lounging near the entrance. They were smoking now freely, the only stipulation being that matches were not to be struck in the open. There was no hiding the desperate character of the coming adventure. The Andromeda's crew did not attempt to minimize it. The choice offered lay only in the manner of their death. As to the prospect of ultimate escape, they hardly gave it a thought. Some among them had served in the armies of Europe, and they at least were under no delusion concerning the issue of an attack on a fort by less than a score of unarmed men—seventeen, to be exact, since two of the ship's company were so maimed by the bursting of the shell on the forecabin as to be practically helpless. It was by the rarest good fortune that they were able to walk. Iris smiled at them in her frank way. "I hope you will all be spared to ship on a new Andromeda," she said.



"WILL THE SOLDIERS THROW OUR DEAD BODIES INTO THE SEA?"

be absolutely safe if we escape being discovered during the crossing of the narrow strip of water that separates this rock from the island," he hastened to say. "That is your only risk, and it is a slight one. Senor de Silva is sure that the troops will not keep the keenest lookout tonight. They are still convinced that the insurgent steamer is sunk. Our chief danger will date from tomorrow's dawn. Marcel reports that a systematic search of the island was begun today. It will be continued tomorrow, but on new lines, because by that time they will have learned the truth. The Andros-y-Meia is not lying in pieces at the foot of this rock, the president has not escaped, and every practicable inch of Fernando Noronha and the adjacent islands will be scoured in the hope of finding him. At first sight that looks like being in our favor in reality it means the end if we are discovered here. The soldiers will shoot first and inquire afterward. I have not the slightest doubt but that plenty of evidence will be forthcoming that we were a set of desperadoes who had unlawfully interfered in the affairs of a foreign state." "I want to do that which is for the good of all," she said at length. "Do you ask me to go to this convict's house, Mr. Hozier?" "I urge it on you with the utmost conviction. With you off our hands we can act freely. We must deliver an attack tonight. God in heaven, you cannot think that we would expose you to the perils of a desperate fight!" His sudden outburst was unexpected, even by himself. He trembled in an agony of passion. Iris placed a timid hand on his shoulder. "I will go," she whispered. "Please do not be distressed on my account. I brought you here not to discuss my own fate, but yours. These Brazilians will not scruple to make use of you and then throw you aside if it suits their purpose. That man De Silva does not care how he attains power, and I know that he and the officer entertain some plan which they have not revealed to you." "You—know?" "Yes, I understand a little of their language. I have a mere glimpse of its sense, as one sees a landscape through a mist. When De Silva told you today that San Benavides was with you heart and soul, he was lying. There were things said about a ship and midnight and a boat. I watched the officer's face. He was wholly opposed to the landing tonight. My mind is not so vague now. I think I can grasp his meaning. Was it not tonight that the Andros-y-Meia was to appear?" "Yes." "Well, may they not hope secretly that she will keep to the fixed hour? Once you and I and the others are on the island and an alarm is given the Brazilians could slip away unnoticed. Yes, that is it. I do not trust them any more than I trusted Captain Coke. Don't you realize that he brought the Andromeda to this place in order to wreck her more easily? It was to supply a pretext for the visit that he made undrinkable the water in the ship's tanks." That appealing hand still rested on Philip's shoulder. Its touch affected him profoundly. With a lightning dart of memory his thoughts went back to the moment when she lay, inert and half fainting, in his arms on the bridge, after he had taken her from the lazaretto. But he controlled his voice sufficiently to say: "You may be right. Indeed, I know you are right so far as Coke is concerned. When I went aft to find out if one of the boats could not be cleared I noticed that a steering gear box had been pried open again. I had time for only a second's glance, but I was sure the damage had not been done by a bullet. So the Andromeda was doomed to be lost, no matter what happened." "Coke will stand by the rest of us in our struggle for life, at any rate. But the Brazilians—" "Have no fear of them. I, too, have watched San Benavides. I don't like the fellow and wouldn't place an ounce of faith in him, but De Silva has brains, and he knows well enough that no ship from Brazil will come to Fernando Noronha in his behalf. In fact, he breeds a visit by a government vessel, in which event our frail chance of seizing that launch—" She felt rather than saw that he had suddenly grown rigid. His right arm flew out and drew her to him. "Sh-s-h!" he breathed and pulled her behind a rock. Her woman's heart yielded to dread of the unseen. It pulsed violently, and she was tempted to scream. Despite his warning she must at least have whispered a question, but her ears caught a sound to which they were now well accustomed. The light chug-chug of an engine and the flapping of a propeller came up to them from the sea. The steam launch was approaching. Perhaps they had been seen already! As if to emphasize this peril there was an interval of silence. Steam had been shut off. Philip touched the girl's lips lightly with a finger. Then he lay flat on the ledge and began to creep forward. It was impossible that he should run and warn the others, but it was essential, above all else, that he should ascertain what the men on the launch were doing and the extent of their knowledge. He found a tuft of the grass that clung to a crevice where its roots drew

hardly sustenance from the crumbling rock. He ventured to thrust his head through this screen, following Domingo's example some hours earlier. Almost directly beneath his eager glance found the little vessel. She was floating past with the current. He peered down on to her deck as if from the top of a mast. A few cigarette smoking officers were grouped in her bows. Apparently they were more interested in the remains of the Andromeda than in the natural fortress overhead. Clustered round the hatch were some twenty soldiers, also smoking. One of the officers pointed to the ledge. He was excited and emphatic. The man at the wheel growled an order, and the engine started again. Though Hozier knew not what was said, the significance of this pantomime was not lost on him. The local pilot was afraid of these treacherous waters in the dark, but next day Frade do Frances (which is the islanders' name for the Grande-pero rock) would surely be explored if a landing could be made. A way busted the launch, but Hozier did not move until there was no risk of his figure being silhouetted against the sky. Even then he warned his way backward with slow caution. Iris was crouched where he had left her, wide eyed, motionless. "Good job we came here," he said. "It is evident they mean to maintain a patrol until there is news of De Silva one way or the other. It will be interesting now to hear what the gallant San Benavides says. If any ship comes to Fernando Noronha tonight she will be seen from the island long before any signal is visible at this point." "Do you think the others saw the launch?" she asked. "No—not unless some of the men strayed down the gully, which they were told not to do. The breakers would drown the noise of the engines and screw." There was a slight pause. "Will you tell them?" she went on. "Why not?" This time the pause was more eloquent than words. Quite unconsciously Iris replied to her own question. "Of course, as you said a little while ago, we owe our lives to Dom Corria de Silva," she murmured, as if she were reasoning with herself. By chance, probably because Hozier stooped to help her to her feet, his arm rested lightly across her shoulders. "I will not pretend to misunderstand you," he said. "If the Brazilians do not mean to play the game it would be a just punishment to let them rush on their own doom. But De Silva may not agree with this top of an officer, and, in any event, we must go straight with him until he shows his teeth." "You seem to dislike Captain San Benavides," she said inconsequentially. "I regard him as a brainless ass," he exclaimed. "Somehow that sounds like a description of a dead donkey, which one never sees." "Mademoiselle!" came a voice from the lip of the ravine. "One can hear him, though," laughed Hozier, with a warning pressure that suspiciously resembled a hug. These two were children in some respects, quicker to jest than to grieve, better fitted for mirth than tragedy. They moved out from their niche, and San Benavides blustered into vengeful French. "We are going to the landing place before it is too dark," he muttered angrily. "We must not show a light. In a few minutes the path will be most dangerous. Please make haste, mademoiselle. We did not know where you had gone." He took her hand. Philip followed. He was young enough to long for an opportunity to tell San Benavides that he was a puppy, a mongrel puppy. After a really difficult and hazardous descent they found the others awaiting them in a rock shrouded cove. The barest standing room was afforded by a patch of shingle and detritus. Alongside a flat stone lay three broad planks tied together with cowhide. The center plank was turned up at one end. This was the catamaran, which De Silva had dignified by the name of boat. "Were 'ave you bin?" growled Coke. "We've lost a good ten minutes. You ought to 'ave known, Hozier, that it's darkest just after sunset!" "We could not have started sooner, sir." "Why not? We were kep' waitin' up there, searchin' for you." "That was our best slice of luck today. Had any of you appeared on the ledge you would have been seen from the launch." "Wot launch?" "The launch that visited us this morning. Ten minutes ago she was standing by at the foot of the rock." Philip spoke slowly and clearly. He meant his news to strike home. As he anticipated, De Silva broke in. "You saw it?" he asked, and his deep voice vibrated with dismay. "Yes, I even made out, by actions rather than words, that the darkness alone prevented the soldiers from coming here tonight. The skipper would not risk it." De Silva said something under his breath. He spoke rapidly to San Benavides, and the latter seemed to be cowed, for his reply was brief. Then the ex-president reverted to English. "I have decided to send Marcel and Domingo ashore first," he said. "They will select the safest place for a landing. Marcel will bring back the catamaran and take off Mr. Hozier and the young lady. Captain Coke and I will follow, and the others in such order as Senor Benavides thinks fit. The catamaran will only hold three with safety, but Marcel believes he can find another for Domingo. Remember, all of you, silence is essential!"

(To be Continued.)