

Moran of the Lady Letty

By FRANK NORRIS, Author of "The Octopus," "The Pit," Etc. Copyright, 1896, by S. S. McClure Company

Wilbur, dressed in Chinese jeans and blouse, with Chinese wicker sandals on his bare feet, sat with his back against the whale's skull, smoking quietly. For a long time there was no conversation. Then at last:

"No," said Moran in a low voice. "This is the life I'm made for. In six years I've not spent three consecutive weeks on land. Now that Elliott—she always spoke of her father by his first name—now that Elliott is dead, I've not a tie, not a relative, not even a friend, and I don't wish it."

"But the loneliness of the life, the solitude," said Wilbur—"that's what I don't understand. Did it ever occur to you that the best happiness is the happiness that one shares?"

Moran clasped a knee in both hands and looked out to sea. She never wore a hat, and the red light of the afterglow was turning her eye hued hair to saffron.

"Hoh!" she exclaimed, her heavy voice pitched even lower than usual. "Who could understand or share any of my pleasures or be happy when I'm happy? And, besides, I'm happiest when I'm alone—I don't want any one."

"But," hesitated Wilbur, "one is not always alone. After all, you are a girl, and men, sailor men especially, are beasts when it's a question of a woman—an unprotected woman."

"I'm stronger than most men," said Moran simply. "If you, for instance, had been like some men I should have fought you. It wouldn't have been the first time," she added, smoothing one huge braid between her palms.

Wilbur looked at her with intent curiosity—noted again, as if for the first time, the rough, blue overalls thrust into the shoes; the coarse flannel shirt open at the throat; the belt with its sheath knife, her arms big and white and tattooed in sailor fashion, her thick, muscular neck; her red face, with its pale blue eyes and almost massive jaw, and her hair, her heavy, yellow, fragrant hair, that lay over her shoulder and breast, coiling and looping in her lap.

"No," he said, with a long breath, "I don't make it out. I knew you were out of my experience, but I begin to think now that you are out of even my imagination. You are right, you should keep to yourself. You should be alone—your mate isn't made yet. You are splendid just as you are," while under his breath he added, his teeth clinching, "but I love you!"

It was growing late, the stars were all out, the moon riding high. Moran yawned. "Mate, I think I'll turn in. We'll have to be at that schooner early in the morning, and I make no doubt she'll give us plenty to do." Wilbur hesitated to reply, waiting to take his cue from what next she should say. "It's hot enough to sleep where we are," she added, "without going aboard the Bertha, though we might have a couple of blankets off to lie on. This sand's as hard as a plank."

Without answering, Wilbur showed her a couple of blanket rolls he had brought off while he was unloading part of the stores that afternoon. They took one apiece and spread them on the sand by the bleached whale's skull. Moran pulled off her boots and stretched herself upon her blanket with absolute unconcern, her hands clasped under her head. Wilbur rolled up his coat for a pillow and settled himself for the night with an assumed self-possession. There was a long silence. Moran yawned again.

"I pulled the heel off my boot this morning," she said lazily, "and I've been limping all day."

"I noticed it," answered Wilbur. "Kitchell had a new pair aboard somewhere, if they're not spoiled by the water now."

"Yes," she said indifferently. "We'll look them up in the morning." Again there was silence.

"I wonder," she began again, starting up into the dark, "if Charlie took that frying pan off with him when he

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"Look here," said Wilbur deliberately, "don't you try to blind me us,



"I think him went catchum schooner."

Charlie. We know you too well. You don't want bacon and you don't want tobacco."

"China boy heap plenty much sick. Two boy velly sick. I tinkum die pretty soon tomorra. You catchum sloop chest; you gib me five, seven liver pill. Sabee?"

"I'll tell you what you want?" cried Moran, aiming a forefinger at him, pistol fashion. "You've got a blue funk because those Kai-gingh beachcombers have come into the bay, and you're more frightened of them than you are of the schooner, and now you want us to take you home!"

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Its new owner wears it until it is too shabby to be worn again, after which it is sold to a second rate wardrobe and becomes the property of a green-grocer's wife, who takes it to pieces, and wears it out of the shop until it is once more shabby. Then it is sold to a third rate wardrobe, where it catches the eye of some coster lady and is sold for 3 shillings.

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Oath That Binds the Burmese.

Perjury having been rife in Rangoon courts because of the form of oath existed which the Burman considered binding, the government prescribed a formula which is a queer admixture of Buddhism, Brahminism and Shamanism. Here are phrases from it, picked at random: "If an untruth passes my lips, may all the gnats that live in lakes, ponds and brooks and the gnats of the five great rivers of India destroy me. May curdled blood pass my lips rather than a lie, and may I die vomiting blood, my body bent in two."

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Books and Their Making.

"At present the American people are divided into two classes," said the head of a well known publishing house in New York, "those who forget to read and those who read to forget. A book was formerly a thing put aside to be read, but now it is a thing read to be put aside. I am not sure which is the better both for us bookmakers and the public, but it is certainly a fact that bookmaking is now a manufacture, while it used to be a science."

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To Make Her Turn.

Mrs. Fondmar—Doctor, my daughter sits and gazes into that mirror for hours at a time. I can't get her to take exercise. Dr. Bruff—Well, I prescribe another mirror at the other end of the room.

Easy Money.

"What are you thinking so hard about?" "I was just trying to figure out the percentage of rich people there would be in the world if fault finding paid."

When a man wears his piety as an ornament you can depend on its being paste.—Chicago Tribune.

Pains in the Chest.

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