

He looked—looked again; then, as the cars came to a standstill, he scrambled down, ran over the intermediate space, and gasped out, as the lady he had been watching turned surprised—

"Sybil—Miss Jessop—is it really you? Can I believe my eyes, or am I dreaming?"

The girl was facing him now. For a moment she did not recognise him, and for that she might certainly be excused.

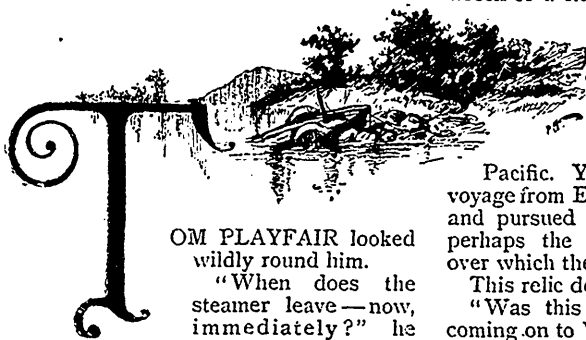
"Who is it? What does this mean?" she stammered. Then, with a sharp, short gasp, she exclaimed, "What! You! You here! Tom Playfair! Where have you come from? and when, and why?"

"From the cars, just this instant; as to the why, I'll tell you that by-and-by. But what good fortune brings you here, Sybil?"

"I came to see my brother Reggie off by the train to Kamloops yesterday. It was too late for the steamer then, so I had to wait till to-day," she explained simply. "I am on my way back to Victoria."

CHAPTER X.

NO TIME TO BE LOST.



OM PLAYFAIR looked wildly round him.

"When does the steamer leave—now, immediately?" he exclaimed.

"Well, perhaps not for twenty minutes. They give the people time to get on board from the cars," replied Sybil, apparently rather amused at her companion's eagerness.

"All right," cried Tom; "wait for me. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Before Sybil had time to reply he was gone. He hurried on board the ocean steamer that lay in deep water alongside the wharf, reported his arrival, promised to be at his post on the following morning, and was back at Sybil's side in plenty of time.

They stood together almost in silence

on the high saloon deck of the steamer till the bell rang.

"Now we must say good-bye," said the girl a little regretfully. "It was awfully pleasant to meet a friend in this out-of-the-way place."

"Oh, you must put up with a few hours more of my company. I am going to Victoria with you," replied Tom.

"Why, you said you were going to China in the *Empress* steamer."

"So I am to-morrow; but I shall have plenty of time to see you home first—that is, if you don't object."

"How can I? The steamer has started," she replied, with a nervous laugh.

It was a delightful sail across the island-studded straits of Georgia. In the distance the snow-topped mountains stood out against the evening sky, while the indented shores of the inlet on which Vancouver city is built were clothed to the water's edge with rich and varied foliage. Just opposite, a bright, clean Indian mission village lay, a white streak between the blue waters, and a bright green clearing in the dark forest behind. To the left, as the steamer emerged from the harbour, there lay, among the rocks at the foot of a wooded knoll, the wreck of a little paddle steamer. This

craft, which lies there abandoned while the tide rises and falls daily round its shattered paddle-box, is interesting as having been the pioneer of the great steam power in the

Pacific. Years ago it made a perilous voyage from England, rounded the Horn, and pursued its way to what was then perhaps the most inaccessible spots over which the British flag floated.

This relic deserves a better fate.

"Was this a sudden idea of yours coming on to Victoria?" inquired Sybil, after she had pointed out the wrecked steamer to her companion.

"Not at all. I had made up my mind to try and get a peep at you, but I little dreamt of the luck that was in store for me."

"You are very kind. I really have not deserved such consideration at your hands," she said softly.

"It was the hope of seeing you, of being near you, that in part decided me to go with these China steamers; otherwise, my heart would naturally have turned to Liverpool," remarked Tom quite simply.

"I hope you had some wiser motive