

sooner be your wife than a queen upon a throne."

"And I," said William, "am yours forever."

"Yes," she replied, softly. "Now and forever."

We who know the sea only in modern times have little conception of what a long voyage meant in those days. The sea indeed is unchanged. It has still its halcyon days of balmy weather, with barely breeze enough to fill a sail; its starlit nights of steady progress, when the waves divide, phosphorescent, before the prow of the ship and close again behind in a long white line. It has still its great upheavals when the mighty winds seize it and lash it to fury; when the blackness of the sky mingles with the blackness of the waters, and all is indescribable chaos, revealed only by the vivid flash of the lightning. But the power to navigate has changed. Dependent only on her sails, the vessel of that day, on these latter occasions, was largely at the mercy of the winds and the waves, and the dangers that beset her proportionately greater.

William had been a fortnight at sea, with very fair going, when the weather changed and a great storm sprang up. Everything had been made as snug as possible for the forthcoming struggle which they had seen was impending, nevertheless, when the tempest broke with overwhelming force the vessel was driven helplessly before it. It was impossible to hold their course. The wind became changeable, veering from one point of the compass to the other, and the effect on the sea was indescribable. It became a chaotic cauldron of seething waves, and the vessel, thrown this way and that, was fast becoming a wreck. One after another the masts went by the board, and the decks were a confusion of tangled cordage and splintered timber. To add to it all, it was night, with a darkness that might be felt. In the midst of this reign of terror, William, who was standing to his post by the boats, thought he saw something gleam for a moment that was neither the lightning or the flying foam, and with straining eyes he watched it. Presently his stentorian voice rang out above the clamor of the storm, as he turned toward the captain on the bridge.

"Light on the starboard bow, sir! Light on the starboard bow!"

"Aye, aye," came from the captain, who, following the direction indicated also saw the gleam.

Breathlessly, the anxious crew watched the light, now blotted out, again reappearing, but ever growing brighter and nearer. Yet a strange thing they noticed. It was not moving as they were, it was no vessel driven before the storm, indeed, save that it rose and fell, it seemed stationary. Then it disappeared to reappear no more. It was then that the dread truth came like a flash to the mind of the captain. Some vessel, driven as they were from its course, had struck a sunken reef, had remained fast for a time, but racked by the waves and battered on the cruel rocks, had at last slipped back into the all-engulfing ocean. And such would be their fate unless they acted promptly, and were saved by almost a miracle.

There was but a chance, but he must take it, and immediately he gave the order to lower the boats. These had been made ready by William and his mate but the lowering and launching of them was attended with great hazard. They were swung from the davits and the first lowered. This was instantly dashed to pieces against the side of the ship. Well was it that the men had not been lowered with it. With the second they were more successful, it was launched and manned and got clear of the ship. There were more than enough boats, and the crew was not large, and the third boat could easily carry the remainder. This in turn was lowered, William and the captain being the last to enter. Hastily they cut away and were fortunate in getting clear. The dawn was by this time just breaking for the operation had taken a long time, but the second boat had disappeared, whether engulfed or not they could not tell. Their whole attention was given to keeping the boat head on with the waves and baling the water that broke over it and threatened to swamp it. For half an hour they toiled when something big and black appeared on the crest of a wave, bearing down on them. It proved to be a mass of entangled wreckage, shrouds, broken mast and spars. With frantic efforts they pulled the boat about to avoid it, and in doing so came broadside on to the waves so that they threatened to capsize. Just as they succeeded in averting this by turning again, a cry came from William:

"A man! A man!"

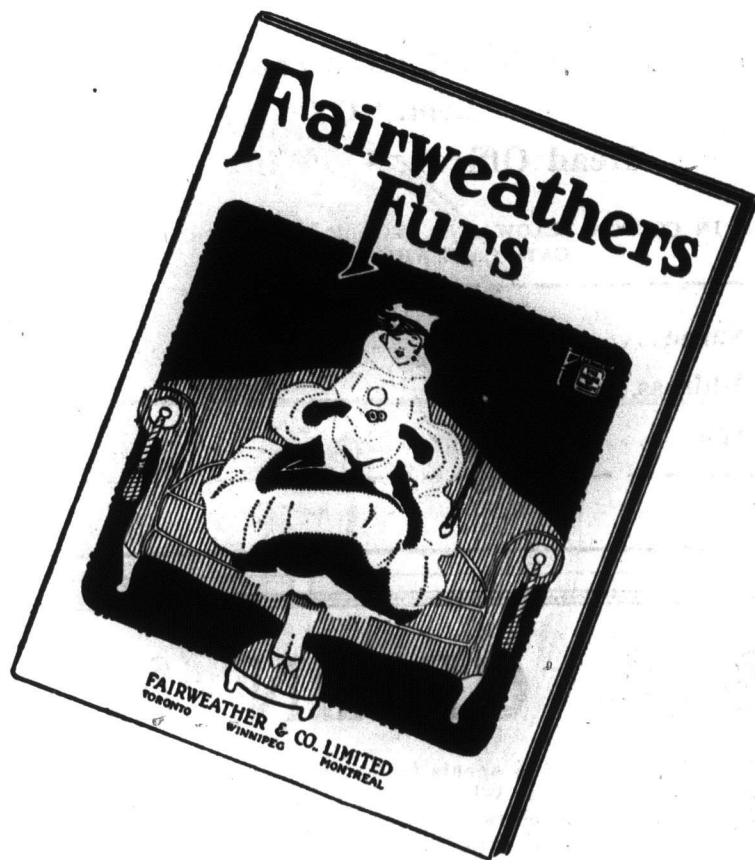
A figure had detached itself from the heaving mass to which it had been clinging, and, half rising, flung out an appealing arm, then sank again. What was to be done? The distance was fast increasing between them. There was a rope in the boat but it was not long enough to reach, and to approach nearer would be madness. Suddenly William seized the rope, knotted one end round his waist and the other to the oar he was using. Then he dropped the oar overboard and sprang in himself. The course of the waves assisted him and he was a strong swimmer, having been used to the sea from his boyhood, and he gained on the advance of the waves till a great swell threw him against the wreckage and he held on with determined grasp. Now came the difficult and hazardous task; how to get back to the boat with a nearly exhausted man. He laid a firm hand on the other and essayed to pull him into the water, but the man, only half conscious, and wholly dazed, clung convulsively to the wreckage. There was no time for niceties. He struck the man's hand a sharp blow with his clenched fist, so that his grasp relaxed, and with a jerk, dragged him off into the water. The wreckage passed on, and they fell behind, luckily avoiding being struck. Holding his helpless companion at arm's length with one hand, William, with great difficulty, kept them both afloat. The oar at the other end of the rope was tossing on the waves and the boat coming up rapidly behind, the man in the bow reached out and grasped it, and rescued and rescuer were assisted over the side.

Plymouth Hoe, in fine weather, was a pleasant place, but to none more so than to two men who paced leisurely there, one evening nearly a month later. They had only the previous day set foot on their native shore and the perils they had undergone had greatly increased their appreciation of it. But they were now

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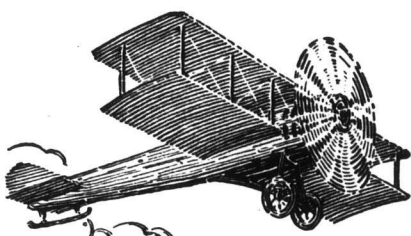
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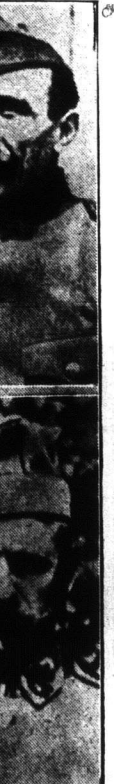
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