

## DICK HARTWELL'S FORTUNE.

By SARAH DOUDNEY.

## CHAPTER I.

ONE Saturday evening in summer Dick Hartwell sauntered down to the quay when the tide was high, and a faint breeze was blowing seaward. A big schooner, painted white, had finished unloading her cargo of red pine from the forests of Norway and Sweden, and was to set sail that very evening for Copenhagen. The quay was quiet just then; a calm light enfolded the low green hills and even glorified the shabby buildings on the edge of the water. Dick enjoyed the briny coolness here and liked the stillness.

A young woman was sitting on a piece of timber, holding the hand of a restless little boy of four or five. Dick noted, with the natural interest that he felt in all young women, a certain air of distinction about her face and figure. She was very plainly dressed, and her simple gown looked as if it had been made at home. Her eyes were dark; the hair coiled up under her hat was nearly black; he thought she did not seem quite English. Glancing at her again, he came to the conclusion that she had been crying.

At that moment she put her hand into her pocket and drew out a handkerchief. The movement left the boy free. He gave a gurgle of fun, snatched up a little satchel which had been lying in her lap, and made off with it to the edge of the quay.

"Come here, John," she called distractedly; but the child only laughed and ran faster. She rose to follow, and Dick, seeing that there was real danger, sprang forward and overtook the boy before he reached the brink. He seized the young rascal by the shoulder, and then there was a vigorous tussle. John evidently resented the interference of a stranger. He kicked out like a Shetland pony and roared with the full force of healthy lungs, but this was not all. In a frenzy of rage he flung the satchel away as far as he could, and it dropped with a small splash into the sea.

The young woman gave a cry which went to the very depths of Dick's heart.

"I'd better have let him alone," he said ruefully.

"I think you had," sighed the girl. "Ever since his father died he has been like this! Do you know what you have done, John?" she added. "All aunt's money was in that bag. She was taking it home to poor mother."

The boy had left off screaming. He looked up at her with a pair of wide blue eyes, and his round face lengthened visibly.

"Didn't mean to do it," he quavered with trembling lips. "Bad man made me."

"Why, if it hadn't been for me you'd have gone over along with the bag!" said Dick with very natural indignation. "It's to be hoped you'll take a turn for the better when you grow up. There's a great deal in store for those you belong to, I'm afraid."

"Please don't say that," entreated the girl, with a faint touch of resentment in her manner. "We have had trouble enough. Besides, a naughty child often makes a good man, and John was only four last birthday."

"Only four last birthday," said John in eager corroboration. "Very sorry, aunty. Is all the money gone?"

"All gone," she answered, trying to hide her tears. "I don't know what I shall say to your poor mother, John. It seems too bad to be true."

"How much was it?" Dick suddenly asked.

"Five sovereigns and about ten shillings in silver." The girl seemed to answer involuntarily. "We have been to see my brother; he is gone to the East to join an uncle of ours, and he gave me all that he could spare—just five pounds. My sister has been very ill, and she owes a little money. It will be paid by-and-by when I have had time to save, but I don't like to keep people waiting."

"Have you any work to do?" inquired Dick.

"Yes; I teach English in Copenhagen. My sister's husband was clerk in a merchant's office there, and after his death we stayed on. She has two children, this boy, and a little girl. It was her illness which made us get into debt; for two months she could not do anything, and when she recovered, my health began to fail."

Dick was looking at her attentively. She had an oval face, and a brown-tinted skin which seemed to soften the dark eyes and marked brows. Not a common face, he thought, and strangely sweet.

"We shall set sail presently," she went on. "The doctor said a voyage would be good for John and me, and Peter Jensen, the skipper, gave us a free passage. His wife came with us; she is our landlady's cousin, and she has been to this town before. While the schooner was unloading we stayed with my brother in his lodgings. Last night he went away."

Her voice faltered a little. She had been standing while she talked; then she seemed suddenly to feel that she had said enough, and she went back to her seat, holding the child's hand fast in her own. John made no attempt to get free; he was quiet and quite subdued.

Dick stood still and reflected. He knew perfectly well what he wanted to do, but he did not know how to do it. Perhaps she would take offence. Yet he believed that it was the right thing, and he must run the risk of a snubbing. He looked across the quay at the slim creature, sitting patiently on the timber, with the little scamp leaning his arms upon her lap. The boy's features were not like hers, but now that he was grave he had caught something of her expression. And he was a bonnie lad, a bairn that any man might have been proud to own.

Still hesitating, he glanced around at the craft lying at anchor, the ugly buildings on the shore, and the wide space of water rippling quietly under the calm sky. Suddenly a face looked over the side of the big schooner—a broad, honest face, with yellow hair and beard. It was the Danish skipper. Dick recognised him by instinct, and made up his mind at once.

"Here goes," he muttered to himself.

"Fine evening," he said aloud. "The lady says you will soon set sail."

"Yes, yes," answered the skipper, easy and frank. "It is good weather, and we shall have a fine passage home. I am glad for Miss Bendon and the little boy."

He spoke English well. It seemed as if he accepted Dick as one of the lady's friends.

So the way was made plain. Dick told what had just happened in a few straight words. The skipper listened attentively, and shook his head over the tale.

"The boy wants his father," he said. "Miss Bendon is too kind and tender. And now I wonder what is to be done? She told me that her brother would be sure to help her; but that wild youngster has thrown the help away! Five good British sovereigns gone to the fishes!"

"Look here, Captain Jensen," Dick began. "I've a five-pound note in my pocket at this moment, and I'll hand it over to you for her. Don't let her have it till you're well out at sea. Tell her she can pay me back when she likes. I'll write my name and address on a leaf of my pocket-book."

The skipper pushed back his cap and rubbed his head thoughtfully.

"She is proud," he said. "My wife knows her very well. But she has had a hard life of late, and I don't see why she should refuse a kindness. Yes, I will take the money for her, and do all that you say."

Dick wrote on the leaf of his note-book, and handed it with the money to the skipper. Then he nodded good-bye to the Dane and crossed over to the girl, who sat listlessly waiting for the summons to go on board.

"Time's nearly up," he said cheerfully. "She's a fine craft; I'd like a voyage to the Baltic in her myself. But I'm clerk at a ship-builder's here, and don't get many holidays. Does this little man mean to be a sailor?"

"Yes," replied the little man promptly; "as soon as ever I'm big enough. Grandfather came from the sea."

"Our father was captain of an English merchantman," his aunt explained. "We all love the sea; it gives us back health and strength."

"Perhaps you will sail again with Captain Jensen," Dick suggested. She shook her head.

"No, I must work hard when I get back. And he will not come here again for a year."

"Well, I hope you'll have a pleasant voyage and good luck at the end of it," said Dick. "I wish I could think of something better to say," he added abruptly.

"There is nothing better to be said," she answered, lifting her dark eyes to his; and until that moment he had never known how very sweet dark eyes could be. "No one can want more than a pleasant voyage and good luck at the end. It is what we all ask for, isn't it?"

He smiled.

"An old gipsy told me years ago that my good fortune would come from the sea," he said. "But I don't believe in fortune-telling. There's the skipper calling you, madam."

He watched her on board, and then waited till the schooner had got under way. The breeze freshened, and she was soon scudding along, a gallant craft sailing into the sunset like a ship in a dream. She had left the quay a good way astern when Dick woke from a reverie and remembered the life that he had to live ashore, and certain claims that it made upon him. He put his hands in his pockets and whistled softly as he walked away. An anxious look clouded his face as he went quickly up the street.

The five-pound note belonged, strictly speaking, to the piano fund. And the piano fund only concerned two persons—Minnie Brace and herself.

About six months ago he had proposed to Minnie, and she had accepted him. The piano fund had been started soon after the engagement. Minnie was musical, and had told Dick that he must begin to save up for a first-rate instrument. She must have something better to play upon, she said, than the poor little tin-kettle at home. He was ready to gratify any wish of hers, and would have done his best to get her a church organ if she had asked for it. For he was honestly in love.

(To be continued.)