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A DAUGHTER OF THE STORM!

BY CAPT. FRANK H. SHAW.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Growth of the Storm-Child.

(Continued)

they feared lest something untoward "What!" shrieked the girl in amazement, "go to school? Rubbish, dad!" "Anything but rubbish, Alice. The thing's got to be done. Mind, it will hurt me as much as you, but I'm not minding that." She looked at him attentively, her fair young head on one side.

"I'll bet you a plug of tobacco to a bar of soap," she said, "that you won't let me go."

"Good heavens, girl, where did you get those expressions?"

"That's the bosun's bet—always," she said. "Except when we get near port, and then it's 'drinks round to drinks round.'"

"Assuredly she must go to school," said Curzon with a shiver. "Now, Aileen, I'm going to talk seriously to you. Have you ever watched Mr. Steadman?"

"Good old Steady! Yes."

"And the bosun, and Rhys?"

"Yes." She was beginning to grow dubious now, she scented what was coming.

"When I tell them to do anything—to goose-whip the fore-topsail, for instance, or to put the ship about—what do they generally do?"

"As they're told, dad."

"Yes, and they don't speak back, eh?"

"No." Aileen's face was a little scared, her eyes, that had already changed their colour to a wonderful grey, were misty and troubled.

"Then, my word goes. And so the order is to get ready for school, and prepare yourself to become a good woman, like—"

"Like her?" Aileen motioned with a half-defiant chin to a picture that hung above Curzon's bunk. It was a crude enough reproduction of a photograph of Mary Curzon, the mother she had never seen. The mild eyes seemed to entreat her, the sweet lips formed an unspoken question.

"I call it a shame!" volleyed the girl impetuously. "What do I want with a school? I'm going to stay at

sea all my life; and so long as I can learn navigation and seamanship that's all that matters."

"She"—Curzon motioned towards the picture—"she could sing and play, and speak French, and when she was with other women she seemed miles above them all. She'd like to think her daughter was a lady, Aileen." And the girl had nothing to say then. That night found her pillow bedewed with tears—the first time she remembered such a thing happening, and Mrs. Merrilees, awakened, heard sounds suggestive of woe. But morning found the child composed. She stole into her father's room, the skipper being on deck, and gazed long and earnestly at the picture.

"If you're sure you'd like me to go to school, dear," she whispered, "I'll go. Will you tell me, please?" And a shaft of sunshine crept through the salt-grimed porthole and lit up the pictured face into brightness. Aileen had received her answer, but—her shoulders shook with suppressed sobbing.

She took a long-drawn farewell of the Zoroaster in the interval that elapsed between coming to her de-

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cision and reading port. She climbed to the royal yard and surveyed the smart outlines of the hull beneath her, she looked down with a swelling heart upon the great tiers of wind-rounded canvas, gazed at the dwarfed deck, at the long line of the creamy wake that reached astern. Away to her left the low southern land showed grey and indistinct—the land she hated. Beneath her surged and foamed the sea she loved, that was to her the very breath of life.

"I won't say good-bye," she choked. "I'll come back to you, dear old sea. They may tie me up in a school, but they won't tie me up for ever. And if dad could do without me!"

Throughout the livelong day she crouched there in the slings of the yard, watched the pilot cutter range up towards the Zoroaster, saw the tiny boat leave the cutter's side and propel itself, a mere crawling spider, across the heaving green. Dead to all calls of hunger, unheeding appeals from the poop, she sat there, and the parting with the sea was made complete.

"I'm ready," she said that night to her father. "After all it won't be for ever."

Curzon set to work thoughtfully, as was his wont, taking the advice of Steadman and Mrs. Merrilees. The latter was all for a day school; she resented her charge being left to the mercy of alien hands. The former was on the other side.

"Give her discipline," he said. "It's necessary. Let her out o' nights and she'll forget all she's learnt in the day time. Cut her off completely from her old habits if you want her to be a shore-girl. That's my advice."

They compromised at length. After consulting innumerable advertisements, after endless interviews, Curzon settled on a boarding-school kept by the Misses Learoyd, who told him, within the first five minutes, that they had royal blood in their veins.

"At the time of the French Revolution," said Miss Selina gravely, "a worthy peasant discovered a lady on his doorstep in this vicinity. She was dying; in her arms she held a child. The lady's last words were 'Le Roi,' and she held out the infant. Unknowing, unheeding, the worthy peasant took in the child and the woman, and, distorting the pure French, christen-

ed the babe Learoyd. This is our story. The child was our grandfather—the Daughin of France."

"So long as you turn Aileen out a lady, I don't much care whether you've royal blood in your veins or ink," thought Curzon. But he did not say it aloud. He marked the faded respectability of the two little old ladies, and read something of their story. Being a sailor, and subject to generous impulses, he decided that Aileen should have all the "extras" on the list, for he guessed shrewdly that the extra money would come in useful.

"The Cedars," as the establishment

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for the daughters of gentlemen was called, stood some little distance outside a seaport town, and to those who lived there the seething scramble of a dragged-down pebble-ridge was the dominant note of the night. Aileen opened her ears as she stood in her little room, gazing thoughtfully to the south.

"I know I shall hate it horribly," she said to her father; "but there's the spa, so it won't be so lonely, after all. Good old sea!"

Mrs. Merrilees was installed in a tiny cottage within a mile of the school. It was arranged that Aileen should spend every Sunday with her nurse, and Curzon held forth glowingly on the deliciously delightful times to come when the Zoroaster being in port, and once more resume with her the old fond relations of parent and child.

"Give my love to the Easting, and to Rhys, and to old Steady," said Aileen huskily. And, when her father left her, she turned away to her box, a solid, workmanlike affair, and drew forth certain gifts, such as untutored sailors might lavish upon one dear to them. One in particular she regarded thoughtfully. It was a sailor's canvas kit-bag, lavishly adorned with five-pointed stars in red. It had been Rhys's parting gift.

"For ther's naught like canvas, after all," had said the sailor. "Trunks and chestes is all very well, miss, so's portmanteaus, but ther's naught can come up to a kit-bag."

Seven nights after Aileen entered upon her new life the Misses Learoyd were aroused suddenly by a tearful girl, Aileen's room-mate, who announced that Miss Curzon was not in her bed. They proceeded to search their hearts in their mouths, for a fresh gale was blowing inland, and had occurred. They found her with the dawn, tied cunningly to the chimney-stack on the roof, her hair streaming behind her, her face wet and flushed.

"I've simply got to smell the sea sometimes," she explained unrepentantly, "and I got up there to do it."

CHAPTER IX.

"Binnacle Boy!"

"Light the binnacle, matey! Up

aloft there and overhaul the royal bountines! Yth! toy sailor!"

Morton Leigh flushed beneath the tan on his wholesome face, and looked about him. He was standing under a high brick wall which time and weather had turned to a delicious old-rose colour. Trees hung over the wall, a good way back the chimneys of a house showed dimly.

One thing appeals more to the passions of a third-year apprentice than another, and that is to be called a "binnacle boy," the pet designation of old shell-backs for a "gentleman rope hauler." It is bad enough to bear as a first-voyager, but for a third-voyager, accustomed to take his place with the men of the ship, at wheel, on a topsail yard, or with a weather-earring, the stigma is unbearable. Leigh felt within himself a strong desire to vent his wrath on the perpetrator of the injustice. But he could see nothing—evidently the voice had dropped like a solid thing from the skies to shatter his dignity.

"I told the mater I wouldn't wear this confounded brass-bound suit," he muttered wrathfully, regarding the natty blue uniform with its shining buttons in deep disgust; but she insisted, and what's a chap to do when his pocket-money's dependent on pleasing the women? It only leads to rudeness. I expect it's a parrot, though."

"Now, then, hurry up and fill the captain's bath!" came the mocking voice again as he was about to start on his way. "Haul tight the poop-down-haul! Bring me the key of the keelson, boy."

"I don't know who you are, but I'll jolly well bash your head if I find you," cried Leigh aloud and very angrily.

"No, you won't. Sailors don't hit women." He started back a little as the branches of a great tree almost over his head rustled violently, and a lovely flushed face, surmounted by a wild mop of curly hair, appeared.

Leigh removed his uniform cap from his head, and scratched amongst his hair thoughtfully.

"How the lickers did you get up there?" he asked. "It's no place for a girl."

(To be continued)

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