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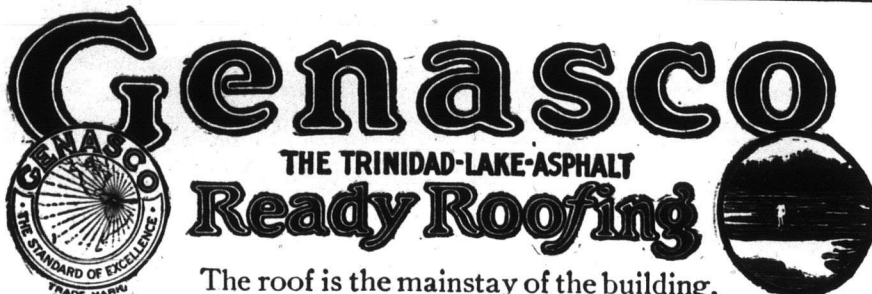
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evening, Mr. Gudge and the widow were alone together. Her cheeks bright with excitement, she tripped merrily round the table, arranging the cutlery. Mr. Gudge gave a deep sigh, swallowed nothing twice, and looked at her imploringly.

"Mrs. Maple—" he began, in quavering tones.

"Where's the spoons?" asked Mr. Porter, putting his head into the room.

"In the kitchen!" snapped Mr. Gudge desperately. "Go and look for 'em!"

Mr. Porter laughed.

"I thought they were in here!" he said.

"Then you made a mistake," said Mrs. Maple, laughing too. "Come along, Mr. Porter. I'll help you find 'em."

Despairing to obtain an explanation of her conduct from the heartless widow, Mr. Gudge relapsed into sulky silence. During supper, which was at length satisfactorily arranged on the table, he refrained from joining in the conversation, except to reply in surly monosyllables to the polite commonplaces of Teddy Walters, who was nervously anxious for his approval.

He scowled darkly on observing Mrs. Maple deeply interested in the romantic details of Mr. Porter's plumbing experiences; and when towards the end of the meal that young man whispered in the widow's ear, and received in response a playful tap on the head, Mr. Gudge could no longer restrain his indignation.

With an effort that well-nigh choked him, he swallowed an impulse to break out into invective against such reprehensible freedom of manner between strangers.

Mr. Gudge was silent.

"I think I know why," said the widow, in a low voice. She bestowed a reproachful glance upon the unhappy Mr. Gudge, and, crossing to the open window, drummed on the sill with her fingers in agitation. "If Mr. Gudge," she continued, "has changed his mind—if Mr. Gudge has been thinking of something he hinted at a few days ago, then his little plan has proved successful—quite successful. I wouldn't wish it otherwise."

A mystified silence followed. Mr. Gudge opened his mouth to speak, but nothing articulate escaped his lips. Ralph rose from the table and joined the widow by the window.

"Nice air blowin' in," he said.

"Beautiful," she murmured pensively.

"Mr. Gudge was suggestin' a tram-ride earlier in the evening. What do you two say?" he added, turning to Winnie and Mr. Walters.

The idea met with approval.

"Come along, then," said Ralph cheerfully. "You'll join us, of course, Mrs. Maple?"

"No; I think not, thank you."

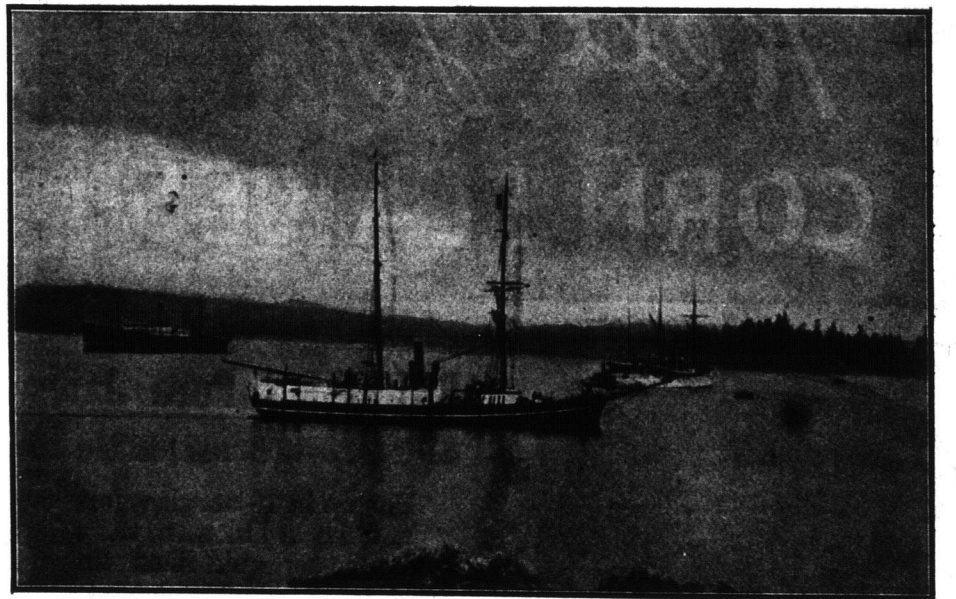
"You must," he pleaded. "I can't go with 'em alone!"

"But—Lottie?" murmured the widow archly.

Ralph laughed.

"I'll tell you all about Lottie on the tram," he said. "It won't take long. We shall 'ave plenty o' time to talk of more interesting things."

"It would be very jolly; you're such an amusing young man," said Mrs. Maple, adjusting her hat with care before



S.S. Karluk, Esquimalt Harbor, with the British Warship H.M.S. Algerine

ers, and, adopting a more subtle line of attack, inquired of Mr. Porter, in a voice of studied carelessness, as to health of one Lottie. To his great surprise, Mr. Porter, so far from disputing any such acquaintanceship, replied in equally careless tones to the effect that the young lady's health, when he last had the pleasure of seeing her, left nothing to be desired.

"I thought you wasn't feelin' anxious about 'er," said Mr. Gudge.

The widow's curiosity was aroused.

"Who's Lottie?" she asked. "Do tell us, Mr. Gudge, please. I'm sure he's a rascal!"

"All I know about 'er," replied Mr. Gudge spitefully, "is that she's a young woman o' Mr. Porter's particular acquaintance—a young woman of 'is own class."

"Sorry she cut you the other day," remarked Ralph.

"A young woman," continued Mr. Gudge, with increasing venom, "wot 'e promised to marry."

"No, no, Gudge!" protested the other, smiling. "I can't allow the promise o' marriage."

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Mr. Gudge. "It's the least you could have done!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Ralph. "I'm fairly good-tempered, but you must draw the line somewhere. If I'm all that you've been tryin' to make out this evening, why did you ask me—bribe me, in fact—to court your daughter?"

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Mr. Gudge, paling before the indignant Winnie.

"Very well," continued the other. "Tell Mrs. Maple why you give me these togs, and asked me to stop tonight."

the over-mantel-mirror. She looked at her watch, and crossed over to the window again. A man paced slowly and silently before the house, and, coming under a street-lamp, the light illuminated a full beard and middle-aged figure. "Ah, there he is!" exclaimed the widow.

"Who?" asked Winnie.

"Mr. Cooper."

"Mr. Cooper! Who's Mr. Cooper?" asked Mr. Gudge and Ralph together.

"One of my tenants," replied the widow. "He's waiting for me."

She kissed Winnie affectionately, and shook hands with the others, Mr. Gudge last.

"Good-bye, Mr. Gudge," she said. "I—I'm glad you've been reconsidering things. It makes it all the easier for me to tell you that—that Mr. Cooper didn't take so long to make up his mind, and didn't want to alter it when he had!"

#### Wanted to Give Her Every Chance

The clerk was most obliging, but the young woman customer was hard to please. Roll after roll of blankets did he patiently take down and show to her; nothing suited.

For some fifteen minutes this mock sale went on, then the young woman said condescendingly, "Well, I don't intend to buy. I was just looking for a friend."

"Wait a moment, madam," cried the clerk. "There is one more blanket left on the shelf. Maybe you will find your friend in it."