

be near to each other. Once again she should learn to look to him for protection. He meant to be so good, so tender to her, that in years to come she would look back yearningly at all that tenderness and then perhaps dimly she would understand him a little. Perhaps that future would make plain to her—when he was dead and gone—some of the love he had lavished on her. Perhaps it was a selfish and absurd wish; but he did wish that in the future she should know how much he had given to her.

CHAPTER X.

By twelve the storm had increased immensely. Bertrand was still on deck. The steamer should have been in Liverpool some six hours ago but she was still fighting with the waves, which were rising higher and higher and dashing over the side of the steamer every now and then. The sea looked as black as ink. It was altogether a wild and grand scene.

Bertrand, who had never gone below, was rather enjoying the stormy night. There was something soothing to him in the mere sense of danger. Presently he became conscious of the fact that Gypsy had come on deck, and was trying to get to him. But it was almost impossible for her to fight against the wind which was blowing a perfect hurricane. Instantly he was beside her. Then silently like a child she slipped her hand through his arm, holding tightly on to him. For by this time, what with the rolling of the steamer and the wind, it was almost impossible for her to keep a footing. "I don't think you ought to be up here" he said a little anxiously.

"Are you afraid, Gypsy?"

"Not now," she answered, getting nearer to him and clinging more tightly on to him. "Not when I am near to you, Uncle Bertrand. I don't think I would be afraid of death now so long as I was near to you."

"Hush! hush!" he said hastily. "You must not speak in that way to me, Gypsy. You don't know."

Gypsy looked up into the grave face bonding so near to her and saw strange distress written in it.

"Why should I not say it?" she asked; "it is true. I never feel safe but when I am near to you."

He turned his face away from her, but he put his arm round her more protectingly. Yes, while she was with him she should be safe.

"I am very glad you are not obliged to be much at sea, Uncle Bertrand."

She said presently, "I think I should go mad if I had any one I cared much about often at sea. I should not mind for myself but it must be dreadful to have some one you cared very much for often at the mercy of these cruel waves."

So they stood for some time silently watching the waves. Bertrand felt almost happy once again. Was Gypsy not near to him and had she not just said that she never felt so safe as when with him? Those words of hers had given him a thrill of intense pleasure. He kept repeating them to himself as he stood there supporting her. What would he not do for her—his little Gypsy? He seemed to feel all her preciousness to him at that moment in a way that he had never felt before.

Presently, as Bertrand stood there holding Gypsy, he saw a huge wave rise like a mountain of water with its snow-white cap of foam. He knew he had not time to get Gypsy below before it would be on them. Like a flash, Bertrand, afraid lest the sudden rush of water should sweep Gypsy away, disengaged himself from her hold, making her hold on to the mast, and stationed himself in front of her, so that he might in this manner break to a certain degree the full force of the water, as it dashed against Gypsy. The wave bore down on the vessel like some great monster, and then broke over its side with an angry violence.

Bertrand had broken the shock for Gypsy by the interposition of his body but he had been unable to keep his footing when the wave rushed on him with all its force. It swept him away on its watery clutch before Gypsy's very eyes. Almost blinded by the sea water, and thoroughly drenched herself, Gypsy shrieked with horror, as she saw Bertrand borne away before her—away into that black, boiling, foaming, angry sea. She cried aloud to God in her remorseful agony but the waves and wind only seemed to mock her grief with their awful roar.

In that one agonizing moment Gypsy learned more of her own heart than she could have learnt in years. As she saw the waves rise and fall and knew that in that watery grave Bertrand had been swallowed up her agony became too intense—everything seemed to grow distinct, and then to sink before her. The blackness of despair closed round her—all was lost to fright. In a misty way she felt she was being carried away but she knew not where—and then unconsciousness wiped away all that feeling of awful despair.

When life again seemed to open to Gypsy she was surrounded by strange faces. Before the mind recovered consciousness the eye seemed to miss some familiar object, for Gypsy's brown eyes wandered restlessly and longingly about the room. Then that last distinct scene came slowly back to the mental eye. Gypsy closed her eyes with a shudder and groaned aloud "O my darling, my darling," she moaned, pressing her hands to her face as if she would press out something there!

Fortunately for Gypsy her doctor was not only a skilful physician but a sympathetic man as well. With gentle thoughtfulness he bent down, placing his hands soothingly on hers. Gypsy opened her eyes, and fixed them on him.

"You have been ill," he said calmly, "but now you are better and will soon be no longer my patient."

(To be Continued.)

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